2dartist 92

Issue 092 | August 2013

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30 pages of tutorials inside!

Brom – Fantasy art legend

The almighty Brom talks Kickstarter, traditional versus digital, superpowers & more in an exclusive interview

Paint fantastical cities

Learn the secrets to creating a stunning fortress cityscape in Photoshop with YongSub Noh

Develop victorious personalities

Learn the art of designing conquering heroes with Fernando Acosta

Learn to paint heroic characters

Create the cover! Talented Photoshop artist **Charlie Bowater** shares her digital-painting techniques when concepting playful, low-gravity characters

plus

- 10 of the best digital artworks
- **Jeff Miracola shares his sketches**
- Discover how to paint portraits
- **+ much more!**

Sinister attire

Ahmed Aldoori takes you through the steps and methods in Photoshop to fashion medieval get-up

Editor's Letter

JESS SERJENT-TIPPING
Deputy Editor

Welcome to the August 2013 issue of 2dartist magazine!

In celebration of our new-look magazine, we bring you the inner thoughts of fantasy's darkest artist, Brom, as well as a brilliant array of his haunting work in our feature interview. Speaking of fantasy, Jeff Miracola also takes us on a tour through his sketchbook in this issue, sharing tips and techniques amongst the pages of barbarians and goblins.

Even though we have a brand new look, the content inside is still as high quality as ever, full up with amazing images from the digital world, including a diverse selection of step-by-step tutorials to help you grow as a digital artist. What you'll notice now is that all this lovely content is so much easier to read and enjoy!

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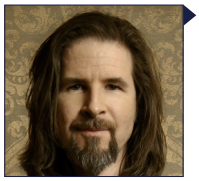
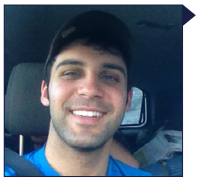


BROM
Brom, painter of all things nasty that bite, has worked in all facets of the creative industries. From books to games and films, he's been spewing out his own brand of deviltry for the last 20 years. This issue, we interview Brom to find out more about our dark hero!



AHMED ALDOORI
Ahmed is an illustrator/designer working in Los Angeles on a variety of digital-painting projects. He is currently designing content within the theme-park industry, so this issue we've drafted him in to teach us how to paint some medieval attire.

JEFF MIRACOLA
Since 1993, Jeff has been a freelance illustrator in the fantasy gaming industry. His art can be seen in games, books and magazines, as well as children's books. Inside this issue you'll have opportunity to devour the innermost pages of his awesome sketchbook.

CHARLIE BOWATER
Charlie is a 25-year old illustrator living in the North East of England. She works at Atomhawk Design as a concept artist and is an all-round doodler the rest of the time. She swings by this issue to reveal her best secrets for painting incredible characters.

FERNANDO ACOSTA
Fernando is a concept artist in the video-game industry. Originally from Columbia, Fernando began his career as an electrical engineer before moving on to work as a storyboard artist and illustrator. This issue, he reveals how to craft a hero in Photoshop.

KHASIS LIEB
Khasis is a French illustrator specializing in portraits and caricatures. He lives in Paris, France, and paints whenever he can. Being a big fan of concept art, he was over the moon when we asked him to drop by to share his portrait creation tips with us!

YONGSUB NOH
YongSub Noh is a self-taught, 3D animation artist from South Korea. He currently works for NCsoft and enjoys playing PC games, the drums and working on concept art in his spare time. We invited him to the pages of 2dartist this issue to show us how to paint a fortress!

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We are always looking for tutorial artists, gallery submissions, potential interviewees, writers and more. For more information, please send a link to your work to: **jess@3dtotal.com**. We look forward to hearing from you!

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If you're having problems viewing the double-page spreads that we feature within this magazine, then follow this handy little guide on how to set up your PDF reader!

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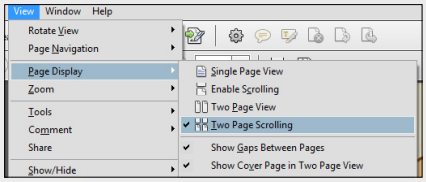

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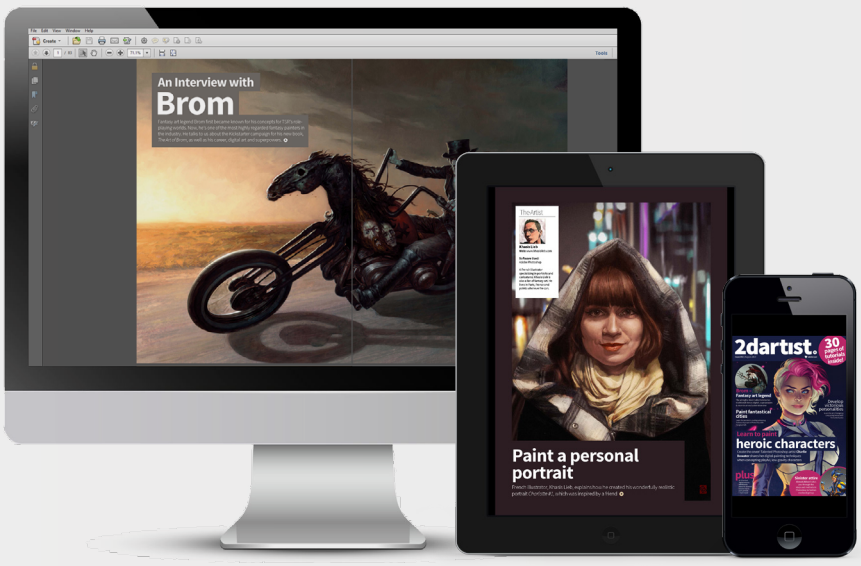

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Brom – fantasy art legend

Fantasy art legend Brom first became known for his concepts for TSR's role-playing worlds. Now, he's one of the most highly regarded fantasy painters in the industry. He talks to us about the Kickstarter campaign for his new book, *The Art of Brom*, as well as his career, digital art and superpowers.

The Artist

Brom
Web: www.bromart.com

Interviewed by:
Emalee Beddoes

Brom, painter of anything that is nasty and bites, has worked in all facets of the creative industries. From books, to games, to film, he has been spewing out his own brand of deviltry for the last twenty years. Most recently, Brom has turned his hand to writing a series of illustrated novels: *The Plucker*, a twisted children's book for adults, and *The Devil's Rose*, a romantic western set in Hell.

2DArtist: Hi Brom, Thanks for speaking to us here at *2DArtist*. We last interviewed you back in 2009 and discussed your awesome career, yet even with the short amount of time that's passed since then, there is so much more to talk about! What have been the highlights of these last few years for you?

Brom: Well, for starters, I've actually managed to leave the house on several occasions; still avoiding the neighbors, though. The life of a reclusive, introverted, workaholic artist comes with its challenges.

Hmm, what else? Ah, yes, I've also written two illustrated novels: *The Child Thief* (a dark retelling of the Peter Pan myth) and *Krampus* (a tale of revenge between Krampus and Santa set in rural West Virginia). Oh, and in my spare time I managed to put together a new art book. You can find all the details for these books here: **www.bromart.com**

"Every artist hopes their work resonates with people. It is very rewarding to find out that people appreciate what you do"

2DA: Yes, congratulations on your new book, *The Art of Brom* (set to be released on the August 5th), which was launched with an incredibly successful Kickstarter campaign. It must be awesome to see that so many people are interested in a monograph of your work. Did you have any idea that your work meant so much, to so many different people?

B: Every artist hopes their work resonates with people. It is very rewarding to find out that people appreciate what you do. I feel very fortunate to have such a supportive fan base, but even so, the wonderful response to the Kickstarter campaign caught me completely by surprise. The only downside was the multiplications of promised rewards resulted in me getting to sign over 12,000 prints – ack!

2DA: What made you decide to make *The Art of Brom* at this point in time? We hope to see much more from you in the future; might there be an *The Art of Brom 2*? ▶

Oil, 2005, cover art for Brom's illustrated novel *The Plucker*

Oil, 2005, part of an ongoing series of floating, winged creatures

Oil, 2009

Oil, 2007, interior art for Brom's illustrated novel *The Devil's Rose*

B: I certainly hope so. I am currently working on a new novel that sets up a world that I have wanted to play in for some time. I hope to bring it to life with several volumes of themed art work.

As far as the timing to my latest release, well, I've accumulated a lot of new art since my last art book, so I wanted to get that out there, but I also wanted a chance to reproduce my older paintings in a larger format and with better reproduction. To this end I re-scanned and hand-proofed everything. *The Art of Brom* is the best I've ever seen my work reproduced.

2DA: Your work has been likened to numerous movements and artists from the history of art. How do you personally perceive your work within these narratives?

B: It seems that labels often get applied in retrospect. Most artists pursue their personal visions, and then later the lineage, influences and such become more obvious. In my case, much of my early work was a combination of things that I loved – punk rock, horror, fantasy, romanticism, fetish fashions, etc – and I feel that this combination helped to create a unique aesthetic. How that fits into the ever-evolving face of art is hard to say.

I guess at best, one can hope that they, in some way, contribute; that their work has some influence. But this will be for others to say. All I ▶

Oil, 2005

Artist Timeline Brom's career up to this point

1984: Started first commercial art job

1987: Produced first comic cover

1989: Hired as a staff artist at TSR game company

1994: Art directed and illustrated Dark Age collectible card game

1997: Released first art book: *Darkwerks*

2001: Released second art book: *Offerings*

2005 – 2007: Published the illustrated novels: *The Plucker* and *The Devil's Rose*

2010 – 2012: Published the novels: *The Child Thief* and *Krampus, the Yule Lord*

2013: Awarded Grand Master by Spectrum Art Annual

2013: Released *The Art of Brom* – 30 year retrospective art book

Oil, 2009

> **"...Good art is good art regardless of the medium it is created in"**

know is that there are some wonderful synergies going on with this new birth of realism and I am continually inspired by the art and artists that are around me.

2DA: In fine art circles, there is an ongoing discussion about the future of painting. It is often debated where digital art sits within this and whether it poses a threat to traditional painting. However, your work – extremely traditional in both technique and subject – is hugely influential in the digital art world. In your opinion, what does the advent of digital art mean for the future of traditional painting?

B: In a nutshell – good art is good art regardless of the medium it is created in. Any argument that art created digitally is in any way a lesser art form than art created with any other medium is just nonsense.

As far as what digital art means to traditional – currently digital art is unsurpassed in concepting and in most other commercial applications. It's

Oil, 2012

> **"I guess if I had to set a goal at this point, it would be something more universal, like Evil Overlord of the World, or semi-professional kitten juggler"**

difficult for traditional tools to compete with the speed and ease with which you can create, adjust, and make changes in the digital medium. I feel traditional still has an edge over digital when it comes to fully rendered images. There tends to be a greater degree of diversity in style, because so many digital artists seem to use the same tools and techniques. But as digital tools continue to evolve this will soon not be an issue.

2DA: It's great to hear that you see such a positive relationships between the two mediums – we fully agree! Do you ever dabble with digital?

B: I do a bit of preliminary work in Photoshop, but mostly I just use it for tweaking and touching up once the painting is finished. Like any artistic medium, I would love to have more time to play and explore.

2DA: As a master of realist fantasy and the macabre, are there any other genres that you experiment with or would like to try? ▶

Oil, 2007, a scene from Arthurian legend

● **Oil, 2011, interior painting for Brom's novel *Krampus, the Yule Lord***

Oil, 2005, interior painting for Brom's fully illustrated novel *The Devil's Rose*

B: Not really. I love bringing my imagination to life and creating things that don't exist, and there's no better genre for that than fantasy/horror. Also, my love of the macabre is a thing born in me; no matter the subject I am always drawn to the dark side (pun intended).

2DA: Do you still have any big career goals left that you want to achieve?

B: It's a funny thing being an artist. No matter how much you have accomplished, you are never satisfied. I start every painting thinking this is going to be the one, that ever-elusive, perfect painting, and yet my work never achieves what I see and feel in my mind's eye. But you still learn something – usually what not to do – and so there's this perverse optimism that the next one really will be 'it'.

Career goals other than creating a masterpiece? Well, I feel I am doing what I have always wanted to do: writing and illustrating my own works. I guess if I had to set a goal at this point, it would be something more universal, like Evil Overlord of the World, or semi-professional kitten juggler.

2DA: When you're not working or eating spiders, what do you like to get up to? ▶

Oil, 2011, interior painting for Brom's novel *Krampus, the Yule Lord*

B: What? I don't even understand the question. Not working? What does that even mean?

2DA: Finally (and probably most importantly!) if you could have one superpower, what would it be and why?

B: The superpower of youth! Youth is (of course) so wasted on the young. If you're young (and by young I mean under 40) and you're reading this, stop wasting your superpower, put on a cape, go run around and have fun!

That or maybe the ability to turn into a house plant. That could be fun too. Gosh, just think of the things you could do.

2DA: Thank you very much for taking time out of your busy schedule to take part in our interview!

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Jeff Miracola Sketchbook

Talented fantasy game illustrator, Jeff Miracola, who has worked on projects such as the TCG *Magic: The Gathering* since 1993, shares his mixed-media sketches of barbarians, goblins and muscular warriors in our Sketchbook feature...

The Artist

Jeff Miracola
Web: www.jeffmiracola.com

Since 1993, Jeff has been a freelance illustrator in the fantasy gaming industry. His art can be seen in games, books and magazines, as well as children's books.

Wizards of the Coast artist, Jeff Miracola, shares a fascinating insight into the innermost pages of his sketchbook...

My sketchbook isn't a book. The last time I kept an actual sketchbook was in my college years. I have a difficult time drawing on small sheets of paper; it feels too confining. When I draw on small sheets of paper, I often distort my figures to make them fit on the page, which results in anatomy that isn't correct.

I admire comic-book artists because they can draw in small, confined spaces. I need a large sheet of paper so I'm free to explore compositions or add more elements. I draw on sheets of 16x20-inches or larger.

Sketching is important to do *all the time*. I draw nearly every day, regardless of whether I have an assignment to work on. Like anything else, the more I do it, the better I get. My ability to sketch out ideas happens much faster now than it did 20 years ago. Also, mechanically I have more control and accuracy. I sketch because I love to do it and because I have so many ideas floating around in my head that they need to be drawn on paper or my head will explode!

Inspiration and ideas

My main inspiration comes from the animal kingdom. I love to visit my local zoo and watch the animals move around. Powerful creatures like elephants, lions, lizards and oxen have incredible musculature that I think about every time I draw a monster or dragon.

01

I'm also very inspired by the work of other artists, such as Frank Frazetta, Brom, Jeff Jones and Berni Wrightson. All of these artists are masters at defining form in their sketches and paintings. It's obvious they have spent a lot of time observing life and studying human and animal anatomy.

Materials

I never limit myself with materials and you shouldn't either. Try many kinds of surfaces and drawing utensils because you will get new and exciting results that you never expected. I sketch on standard white Bristol paper, toned printmaking paper, colored paper, watercolor paper, and drawing papers of various textures and brands.

In addition to the many surfaces I sketch on, I also use a wide array of drawing utensils, such as Ebony pencils, colored pencils, brushes and India ink, pen brushes, quill pens, charcoal pencils, water-based markers, and enamel-based paint markers.

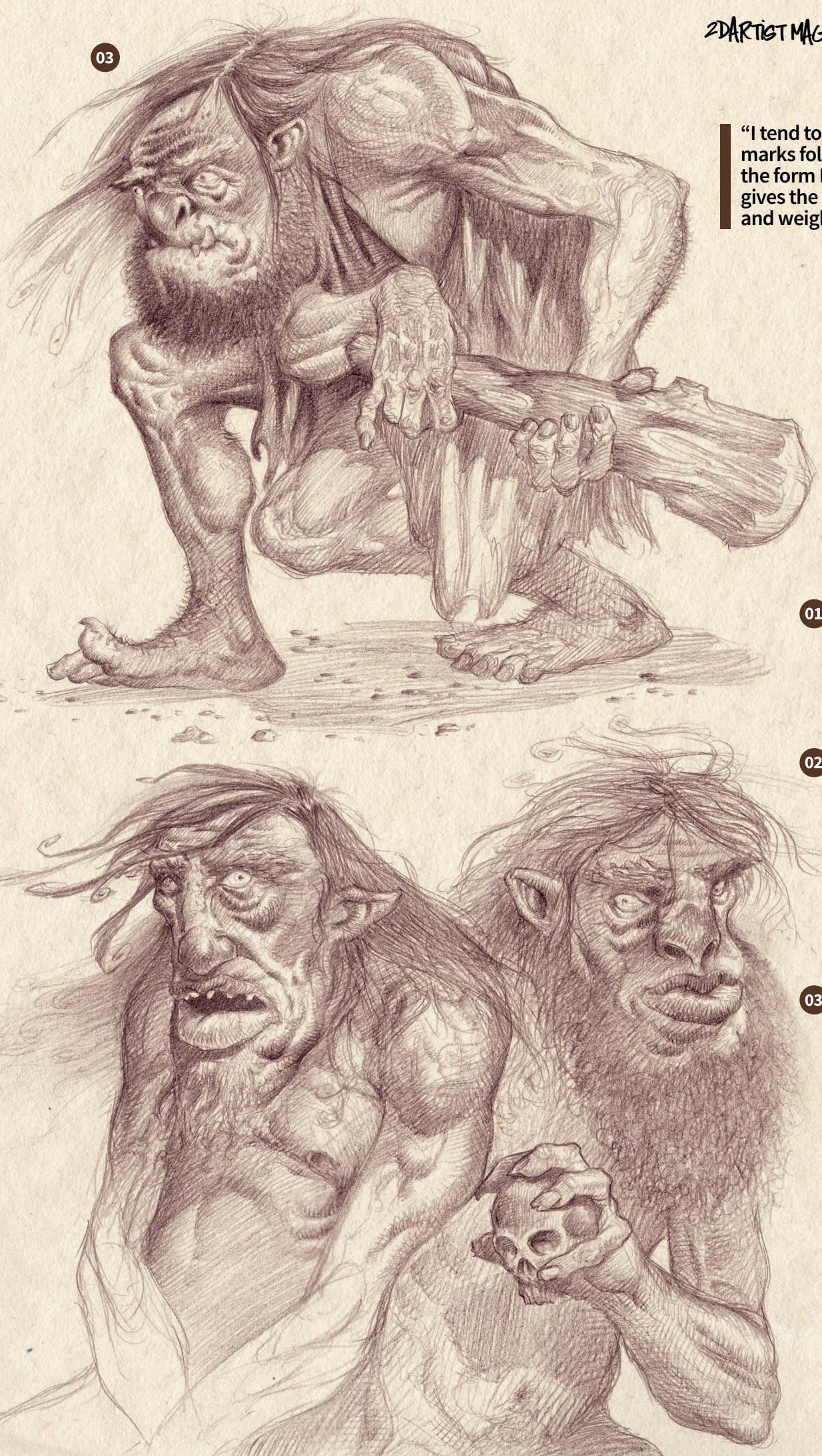
02

PRO TIP

Pencil grip variation

Not only do I experiment with different kinds of pencil and the surfaces I sketch on, I also experiment with the way I hold my pencil. Holding the pencil on the side, so that it is nearly parallel to the surface, allows me to do shading that would otherwise take much longer if I held the pencil with the point down.

Applying different amounts of pressure as the side of the lead moves across the surface also gives me varied, pleasing results. I use this technique for shading musculature and quickly covering large areas of my sketch.



“I tend to make my pencil marks follow the contour of the form I’m rendering. This gives the muscles volume and weight”

01 A forest nymph queen accompanied by a tree elemental, presents the viewer with deer carcasses in this sketch I call *The Offering.*

02 Sketched purely for fun, this drawing emerged without any planning. I just put pencil to paper and started drawing. I love to draw meaty creatures where it appears the skin is tightly stretched across the muscles.

03 I like to explore the anatomy of different creatures. Giants are often depicted as being gangly with thin, sinewy muscles. Other than their look, the only clue that these are actually giants is the human skull one of the giants is holding.

04

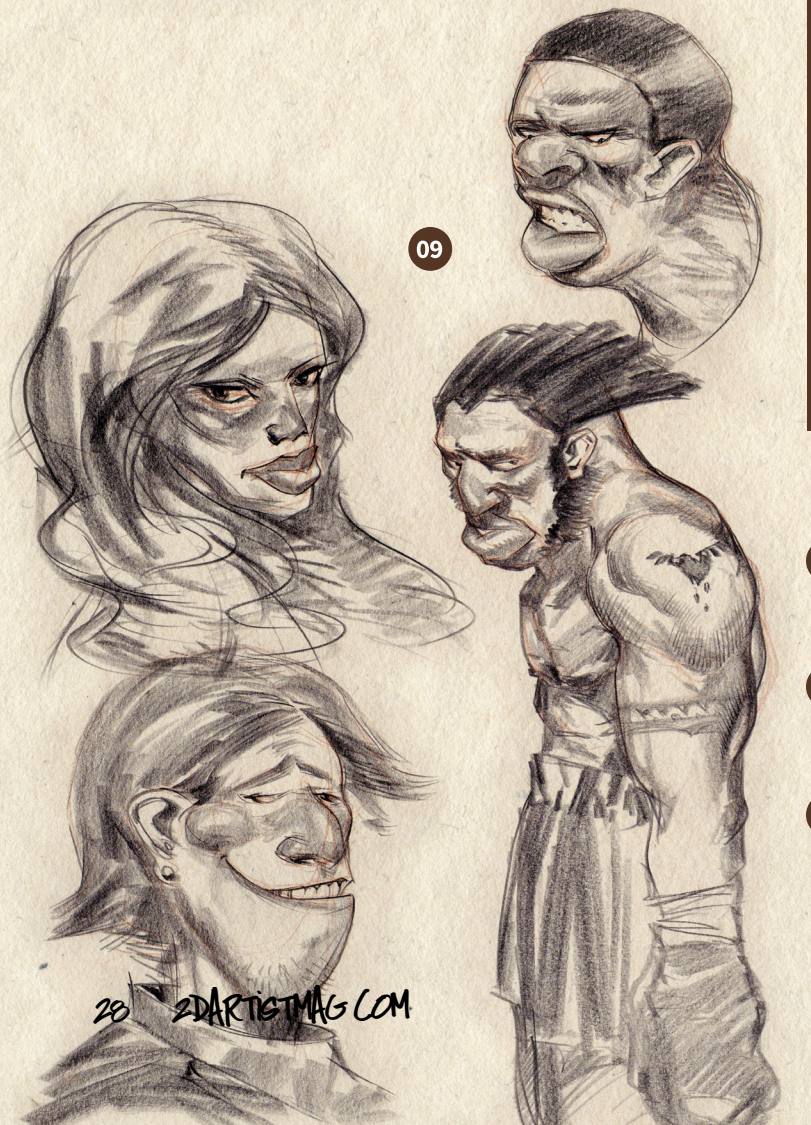
04 When I draw muscles, I tend to make my pencil marks follow the contour of the form I'm rendering. This gives the muscles volume and weight. This goblin's nose and lower lip are a good example of this particular technique.

05 When I sketch with brush and ink, I feel like I'm sculpting rather than drawing. I use short brush strokes to carve my forms and also pay close attention to my lights and darks to move the viewer's eyes around the composition.

06 Some of my sketches start out loosely and I get tighter and tighter with my rendering, to the point where it becomes a finished piece of art rather than a sketch. Such is the case with these two drawings.

07 Sketches done during a convention, such as this barbarian, are a great way to explore themes, subjects or expressions that you might not otherwise tackle. I like the cartoony expressiveness to his face.

J.MIRCOLA



PRO TIP

Tools of the trade

Who said sketching had to be done with just pencils? I like to use all kinds of tools to achieve various results when I sketch. An old toothbrush is perfect for creating splatters. I pour out a bit of ink onto my palette and dip the toothbrush in the ink. Wearing a vinyl glove, I then flick the toothbrush to create splatter effects on my drawing.

Sketching should be about experimenting to find new and surprising results, so expand the tools at your disposal by using items like a toothbrush, sandpaper, plastic fork, etc.

08 The theme of Neanderthal mother and child is something that shows up in my sketches a lot. I'm intrigued by the idea of a large, powerful being having a softer side and caring for a small, delicate creature.

09 Quick strokes with an Ebony pencil can create very expressive lines, allowing me to define a form with only one stroke. The sketches seen here were each created in a matter of minutes.

10 There are days when every pencil stroke is a struggle. Then there are good days when the pencil seems to be moving itself. These warm-up sketches have a lot of energy and movement because it was a very good day.

"Quick strokes with an Ebony pencil can create very expressive lines, allowing me to define a form with only one stroke"

10

11

PRO TIP

Toned paper and white pencils

When I have a little more time for my sketches, I occasionally like to work them up in more detail, especially if I'm happy with the direction the sketch is going. Sketching on toned paper, such as Rives Tan Printmaking Paper, allows me to use a white Prismacolor pencil to render highlights, so that I can flesh out the various forms I am rendering.

This technique has the added benefit of speeding up the final painting process, since I've already given a lot of thought to the dark and light areas of my sketch.

11 As an artist I never stop learning. Even though I've been out of college for over 20 years, I attend figure drawing classes because I feel improvements can always be made to my drawing skills.

12 Detailed sketches are sometimes needed for me to really envision what I have in mind for a painting. And sometimes I just get carried away rendering a knotted, gnarly tree. It was time-consuming, but fun.

13 This female warrior sketch was created for an oil painting of mine entitled *Forsaken*. In creating this character, it was very important to me that she be portrayed as a true warrior, not a half-naked warrior that fights in a bikini.

14 Pencil marks were flying all over the place in this sketch. I did this drawing in 10 minutes, which kept me from getting too focused on details and instead allowed me to capture the essence of the pose and form.

14

2dartist

Would you like to see your sketches featured in 2dartist magazine?

We're always on the lookout for talented artists and their artwork to adorn the pages of our magazine. If you think you have what it takes, get in touch!

To submit, simply email Jess at **jess@3dtotal.com** with a selection of your images or a link to your portfolio online, plus a little information about you.

We look forward to hearing from you!

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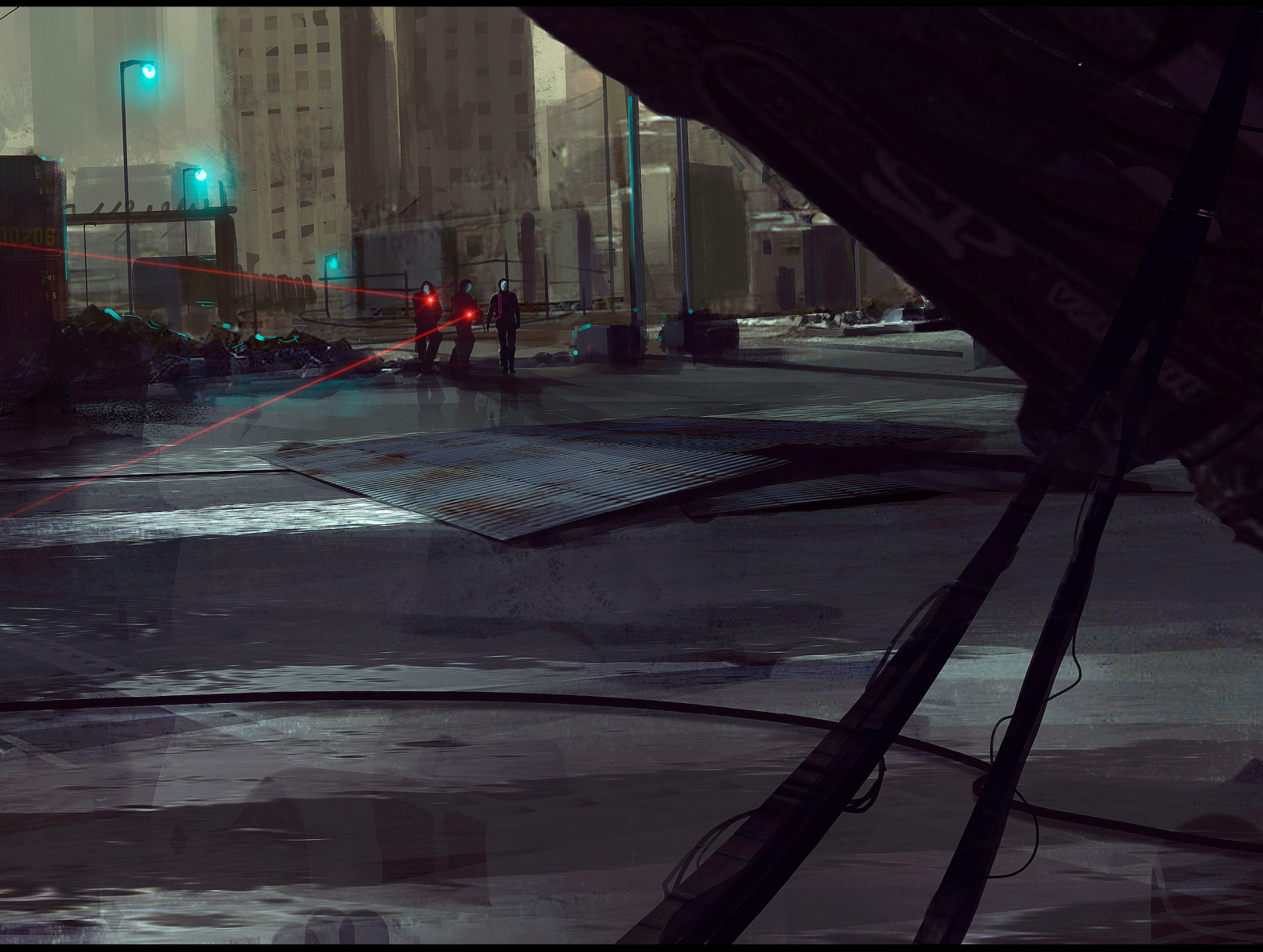

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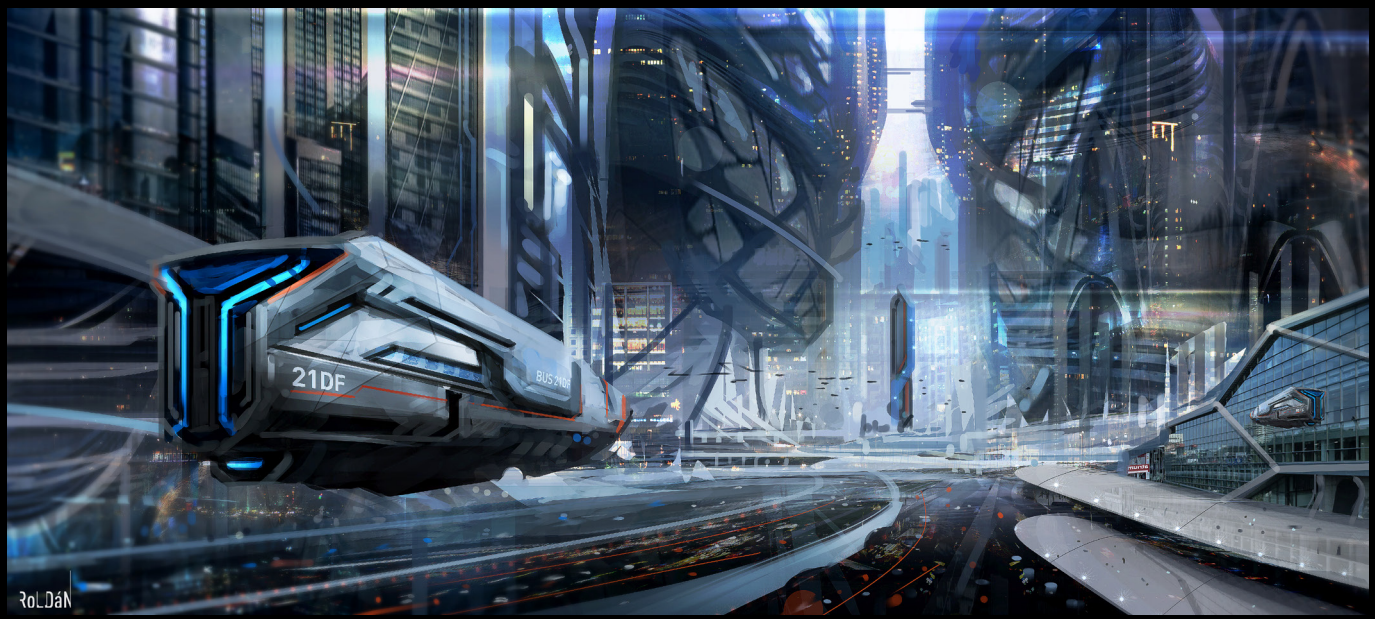

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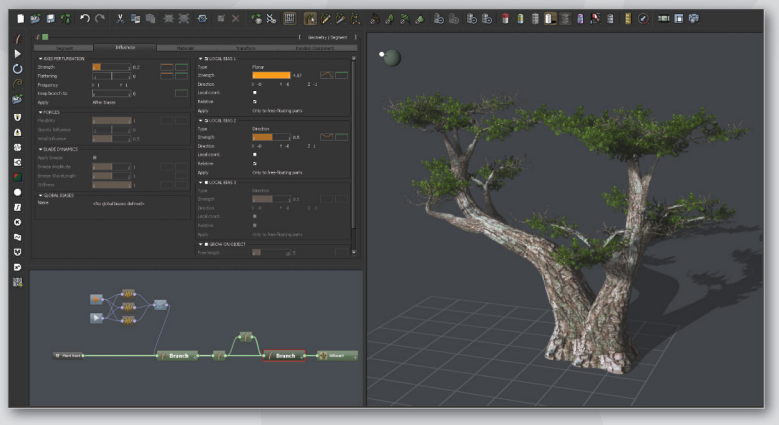

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The Artist

Charlie Bowater
Web: http://charliebowater.tumblr.com/

Software Used:
Adobe Photoshop

Charlie Bowater is a 25 year old illustrator living in the North East of England. She works at Atomhawk Design as a concept artist and is an all-round doodler the rest of the time.

Learn to paint heroic characters

When designing characters for movies or video games, it's important to think about the different possible worlds and how a human character could have evolved to cope with his or her environment. In this tutorial, Charlie Bowater takes you through her design process, exploring a variety of factors that would affect and influence the character's evolution and anatomy, to convey a visual idea that could be passed on to a 3D modeler or art director.

Charlie Bowater reveals her digital-painting secrets for crafting convincing characters

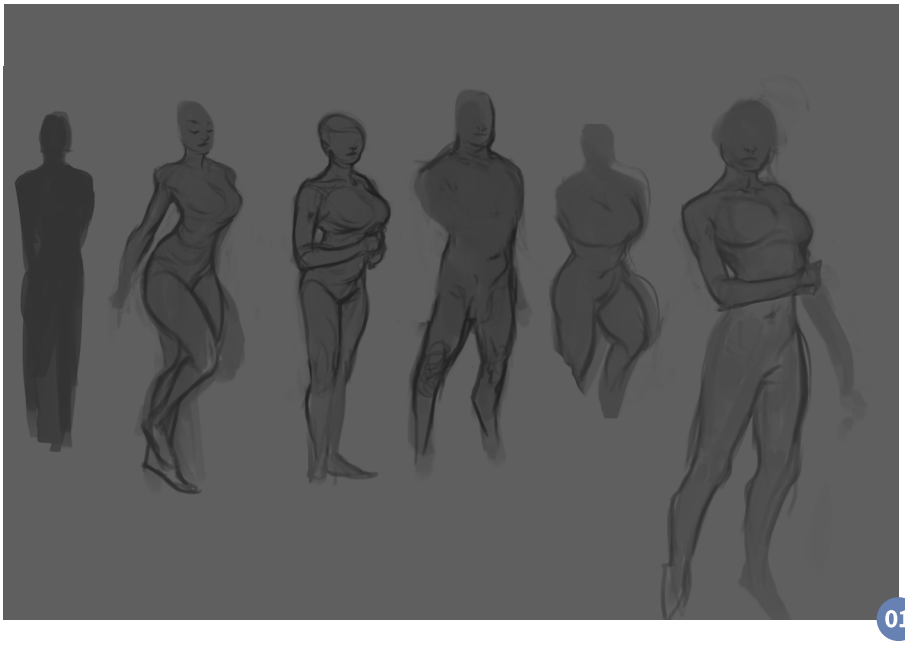
My starting point for this character tutorial is the theme "low gravity" and the idea that the character must have adapted to survive in that particular aspect of their environment.

Any time I have a brief to work to it's always good to research, especially if there's a particular in that brief that you aren't that familiar with.

After a little reading, let me tell you: the effects of low gravity on the body aren't that great. Aside from how fun it looks to float around in space to start with, low gravity soon takes its toll on the body.

There's no way to know exactly what would happen to a human if they spent a few years in space, but there are examples of the kinds of effects astronauts suffer: loss of body mass and bone density, muscle atrophy, nasal congestion, motion sickness and sleep disturbance, just to name a few.

With these kinds of effects it would be easy enough to throw together a pretty grim-looking character, but I'd rather lean on the fun side of things, take a few elements from the side effects and work them into the character design.



01

01 Starting with a sketch: To get things started I'm blocking in some sketchy character shapes and silhouettes. This is to help me try and find the character that I'm after. At this point I really don't know if I want to paint a male or female, although I am leaning towards the female side.

One thing that particularly stuck with me when reading through the low gravity effects is that without the force of gravity, a lot of the blood in a human body pools around the core – the torso, chest and even the head – so I'm trying to exaggerate that shape a little more than usual.

02 Iteration, iteration, iteration: So here we have my chosen character silhouette. I like this one the most and she has that subtle apple shape to her figure and a simple pose; handy if she were ever to be a fully modeled.

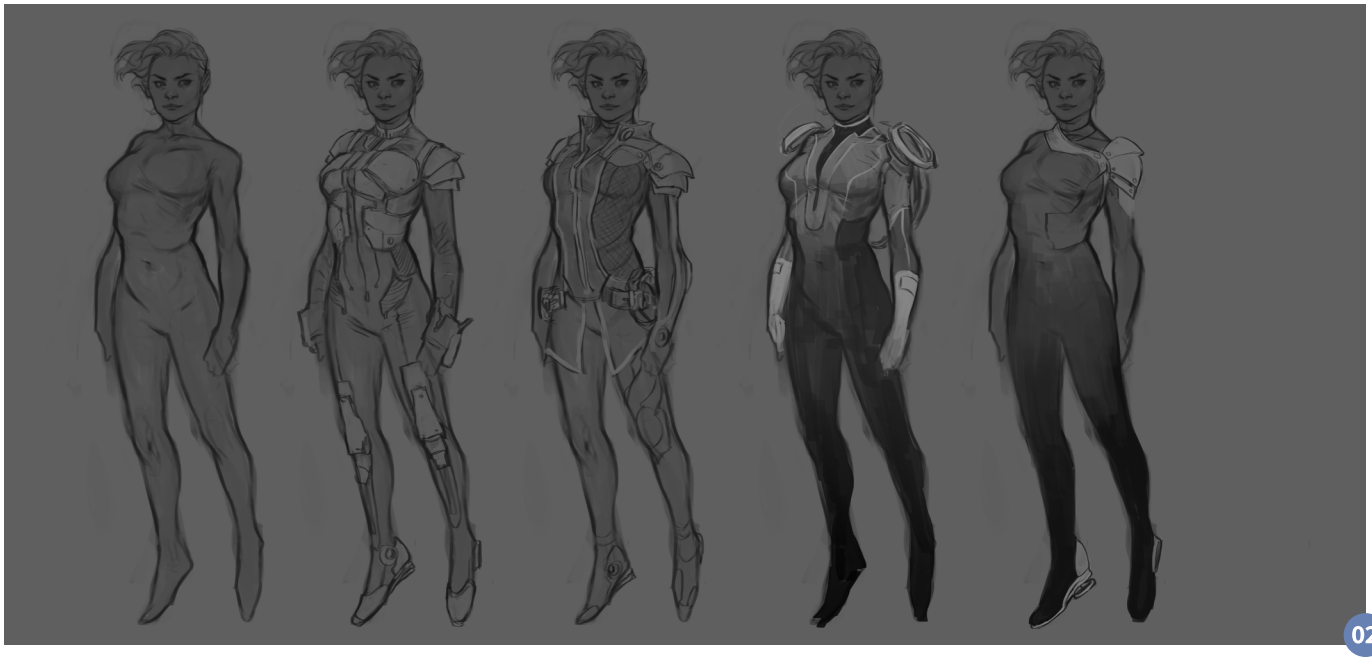
Next up is the task of fine-tune her design and deciding on an outfit! I know that I want it to be ▶

PRO TIP

Don't be afraid of color

Color is such an important part of painting for me and I really enjoy having fun with it. That doesn't mean that I want to use bright or high contrast colors constantly; sometimes I love a nice, subtle palette. I guess my point is, don't be afraid of it.

Practice what works well together, keep a color wheel where you can see it or even look up color palette creators online; **http://colorschemedesigner.com/** for instance.



02

fairly form-fitting, nothing too bulky or anything that would get in the way when you have even less control of your body in low gravity. I'd also like it to be fairly structured and provide a little support/protection if you were to float around and bump into things.

03 **Deciding on the initial design:** So here we have my chosen initial design. I like the look of this outfit and it hits on some of the elements I want to include; form-fitting and a little structured.

I do like certain aspects of the other outfits, but I'm happy to go ahead with this as my initial design. I can always add further elements to her design as I work my way through the painting. Sometimes I'm pretty set on the initial idea and other times they progress throughout the painting, I think either way can work well depending on the purpose of the character.

04 **Starting the color:** So now that I have a design that I'm happy with, it's time to get started on the color. I mentioned before that with these types of low gravity effects the design could easily get quite grim, but I actually want this to be a fairly fun design. After all, how often would I get the opportunity to paint characters in a low-gravity environment?

So I'm taking inspiration from the effects, but taking charge of my artistic license too. I'm laying

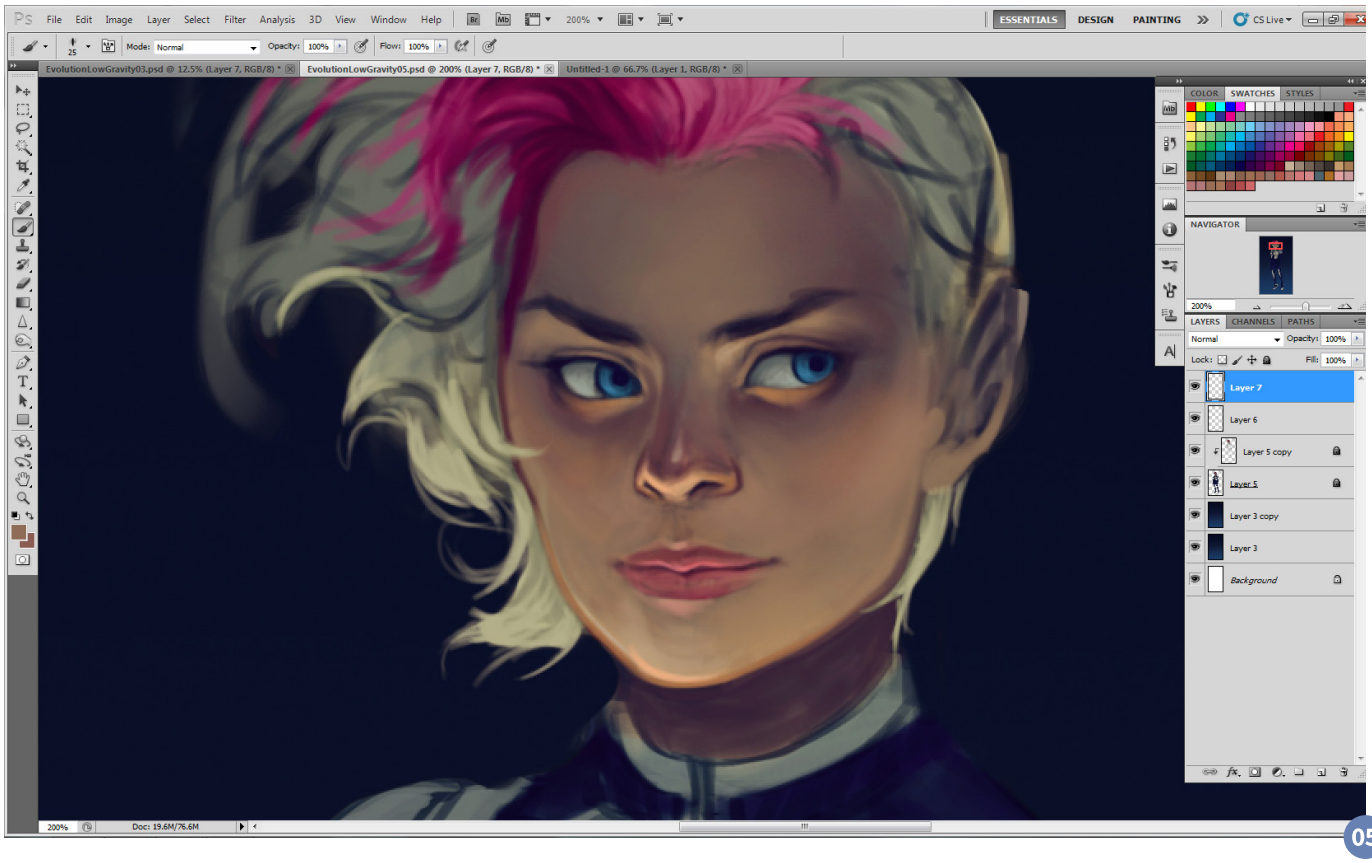
03

04

down all of my base colors, both underneath and on the character herself. I'm using an Overlay clipping mask layer above the character and then merging the character and color layers together.

05 **Choosing a light source:** Now that I've laid down my base colors it's a good time to start thinking about my light source. I want something that will really help the colors pop and I think having the character under-lit will help with that, it seems like it just ramps up the contrast in general.

So I block in some lighter tones and picking out the sections of the face where the light will hit the most: her chin, under her nose and underneath her eyes. There's also a slight graduation from light to dark as you move up the face.



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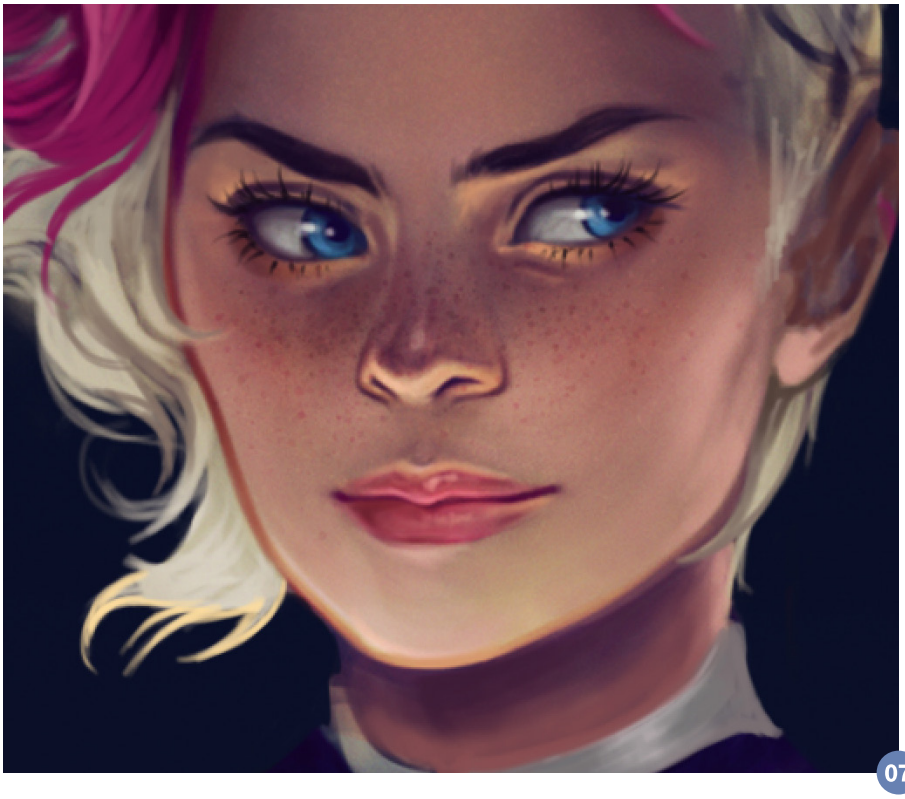

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06 **Don't forget to flip!** I do it so much it seems a given really, but don't forget to flip your image. Flipping is a great way to gain a new perspective on a painting. It really helps when noticing mistakes; they usually stick out like a sore thumb once flipped!

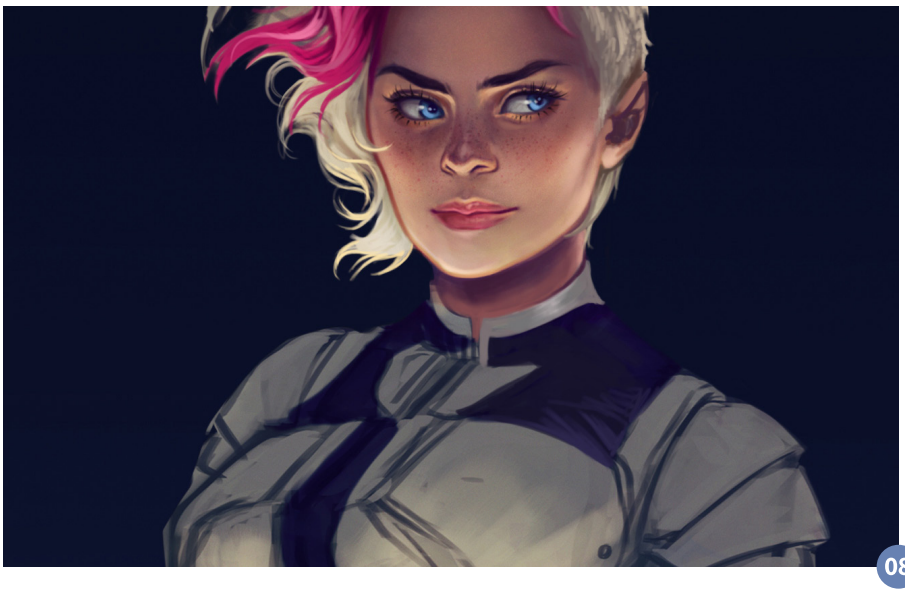
Try and do this every hour or so; that way you won't reach the end of a painting and realize it looks terrible flipped the other way (Image > Image Rotation > Flip Canvas Horizontal).

07 **A little bit of detail:** Now that the color and light source are underway I'm happy to start building up the details. I always gravitate towards working on the face when it comes to characters. I like giving the painting a focus and it normally cements whether or not I'm happy with the character – the face has to be right!

I'm building up the under-lit lighting and the contrast of the color hitting her face, adding in more orange tones. I'm also just gradually adding in more details like her eyes and her freckles.

08 **To outline or not:** I don't normally like to keep outlines or sketch lines in the final artwork when it comes to characters, but I do kind of like some of the outlines in this painting. You'll notice there are some pretty solid lines around her face and her jaw line in particular.

I feel like this is bordering on cartoony, enough to carry off leaving some lines behind, however I am making sure they're not black. Black outlines ▶

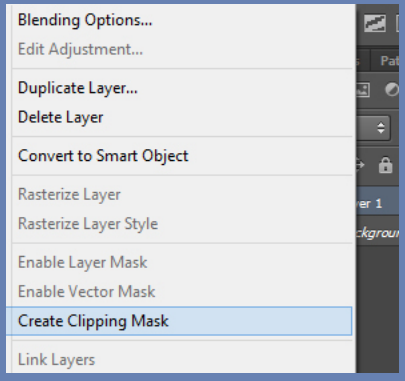


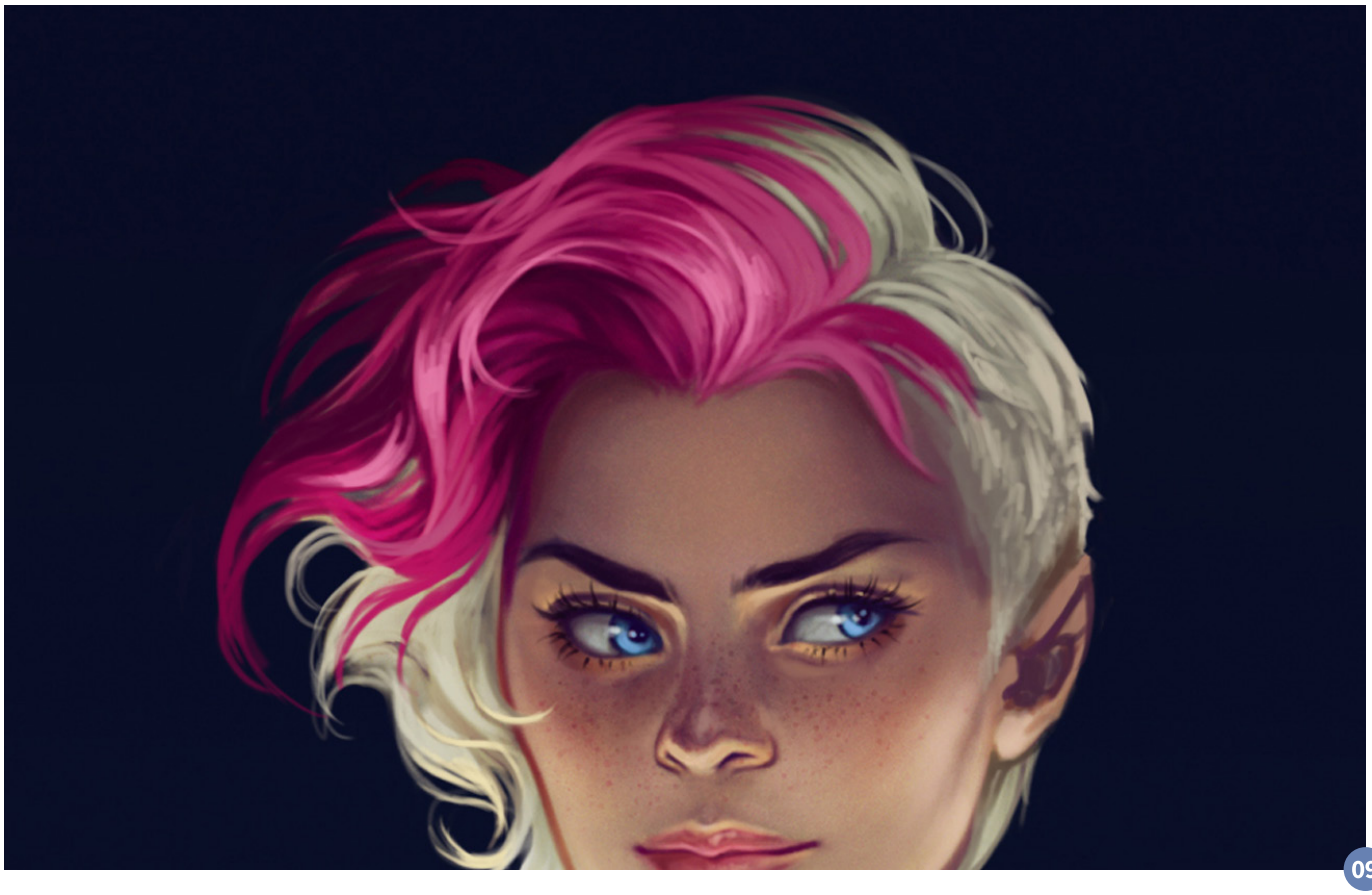
08

PRO TIP

Oh, clipping masks!

I spent an awfully long time never using clipping masks, but I think once you discover them you realize how helpful and time-saving they can be. If you have a character silhouette, for example, it's great to add mask layers (New layer > right mouse button > Create Clipping Mask)! Now everything on that layer is constricted to the shape of your character. There's no more pesky erasing of the sections you don't need. Huzzah!





09

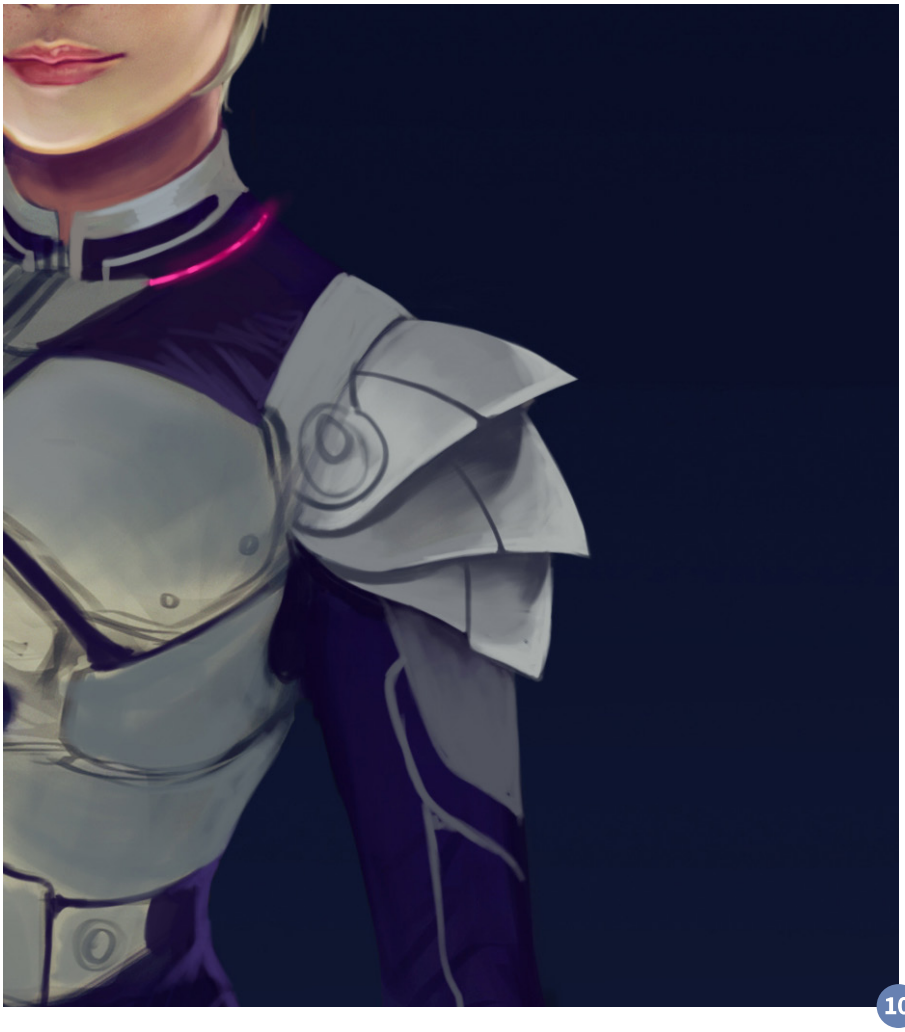
would be a bit too stark, but I think going with a tone similar to the color of her shadows works quite well.

09 **Color theory:** I want to briefly touch on the subject of color theory, which is a whole kettle of fish in itself really! I've gone for a fairly monochromatic color theme here, as you can see, which is centered around blue. If I kept everything in the image blue however, it would look boring as hell.

Adding a splash of vibrant pink in her hair and accents on her suit really help to add some contrast to the image. It makes the blue look bluer and the pink look pinker. It ramps up the contrast between the colors, but also adds a sense of harmony. I'm only using small accents of pink to make sure it remains an accent and not a 50/50 split.

10 **Starting on the armor:** So now that the character is in full swing, I'm happy with the face and the progression of the color theme, it's time to start on the armor. Well, I'm calling it armor, but I want it to look somewhere between padding and armor, perhaps the kind of structure you might find on motorcycle jackets, although I'm going for something a bit more sci-fi looking.

I want to give it a segmented approach, so that it still allows for plenty of movement and isn't



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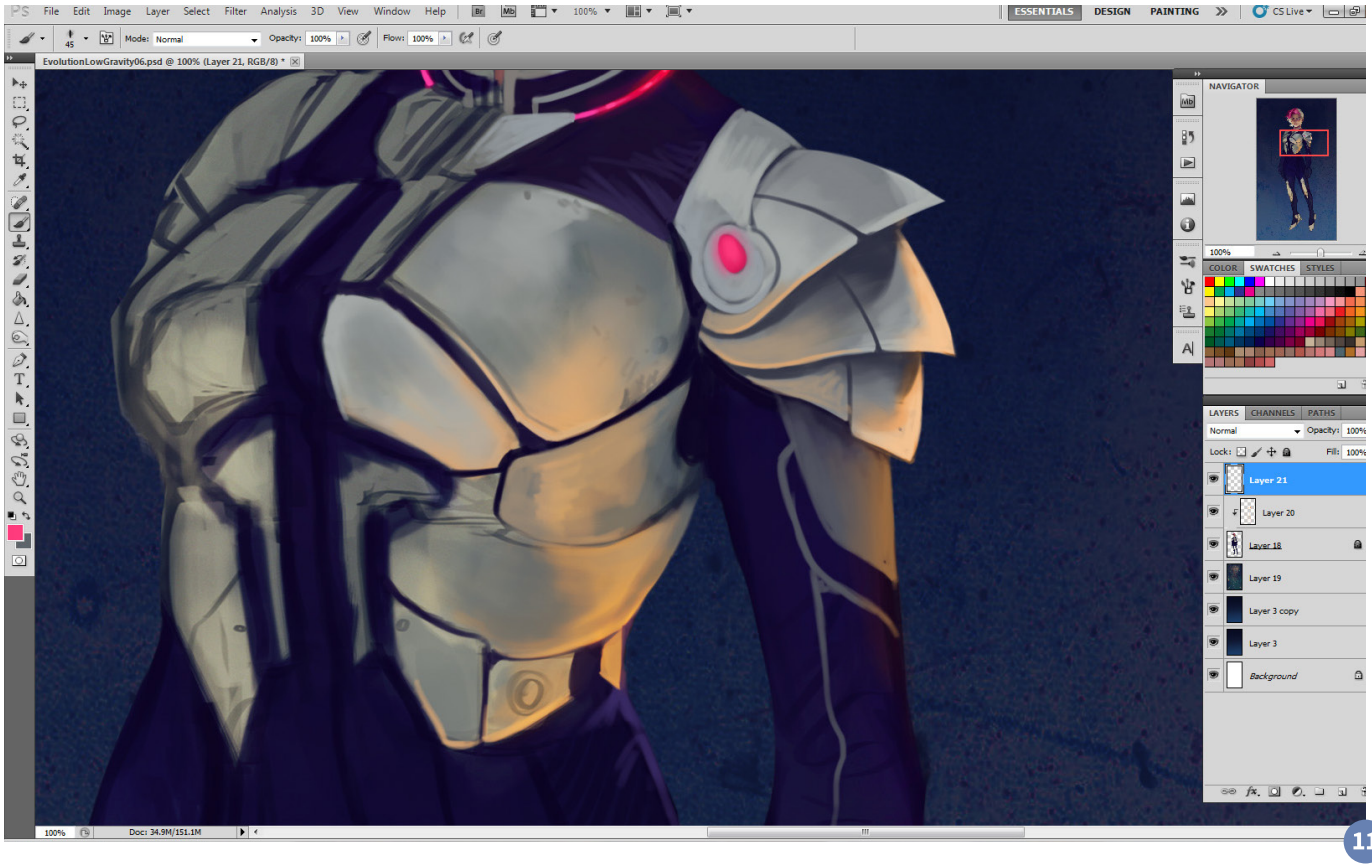

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> **"I don't want the armor to end up looking like metal, so I'm avoiding making it highly reflective. Keeping everything soft and not overly highlighting it should help with that"**

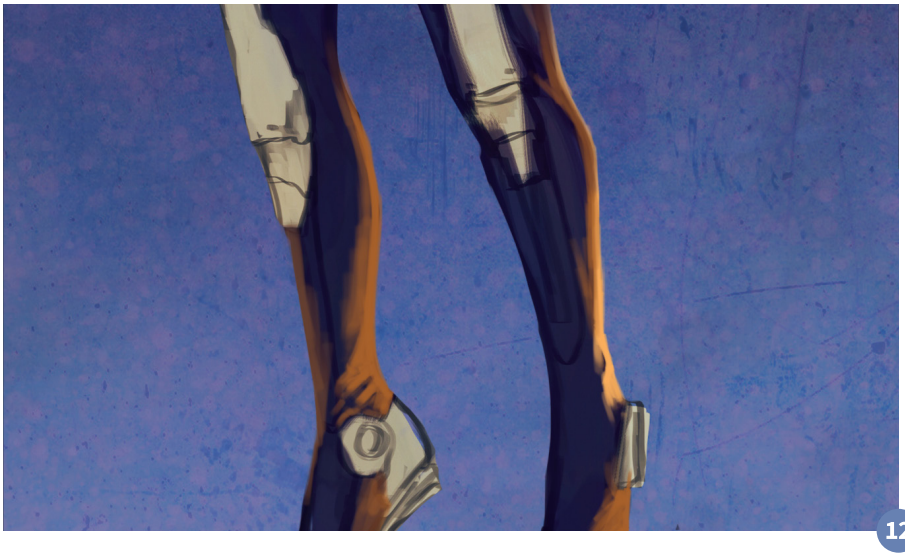
restricting, and I'm giving the segments a kind of egg shell-look/texture because I think it'll look good. Any excuse.

11 **Lighting and form:** At this stage I'm building up the form of the armor and the lighting hitting it as I go; the two go hand-in-hand so it makes sense to work on them together.

I'm trying to give the armor a form-fitting structure whilst trying to retain some softness. I don't want the armor to end up looking like metal, so I'm avoiding making it highly reflective. Keeping everything soft and not overly highlighting it should help with that.

As for the main light source, again I'm following the lighting from the face and lighting it from underneath.

12 **A little more texture:** Up until now I've barely looked at the poor girl's legs, so it's high time to give them a bit of attention. All I'm doing here really is following suit with the rest of the image, and building up the form and ▶



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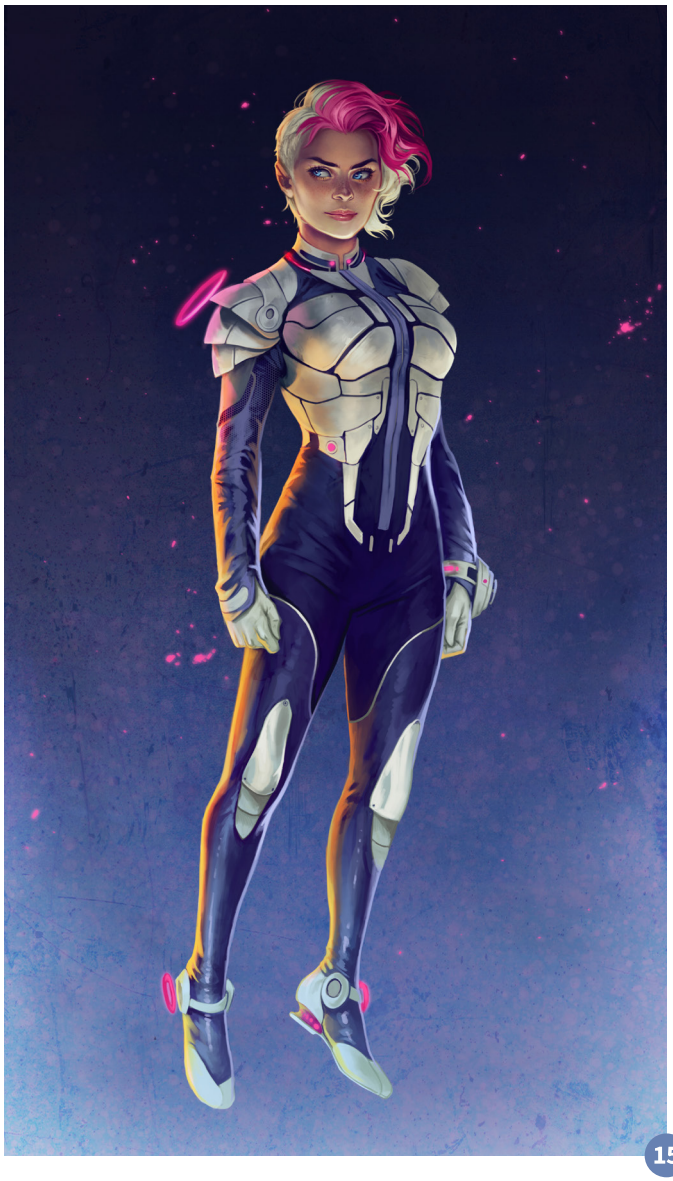

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texture of her outfit. And, of course, adding in the all-important lighting.

Being as the lighting in this image is coming up from underneath the character, it makes sense that her legs and feet should have some of the strongest highlights and rim lighting, so I'm making sure to use some really bright pops of yellow and orange.

13 **Don't forget the Hands!** Don't worry; I wasn't really going to leave her without any hands. I may have done once upon a time, but seriously don't do it. The best way to improve at subjects/themes/body parts is to paint them, so no hiding them behind her back.

All joking aside, it's a pretty simple pose, so I'm just opting for having her hands resting gently at her side. I'm giving her white gloves to tie in with the color of her armor; somehow I don't think pink would have worked as well...

14 **Because I can, damn it:** So we're pretty much in the final stages of the painting now and for me this usually consists of adding in all those super fun final details... and in this painting, that means glowing stuff.

Now I don't normally like to add nonsensical floating, glowing bits of clothing. But I couldn't help myself this time. How often do I paint characters in low gravity? So to hell with it, I'm giving her a little shoulder accent in bright neon pink; I think it adds a bit of fun and another touch of color to add to the contrast. I did say I was leaning on the fun side of things, after all.

15 **The final touches:** I'm obviously loving the pink as I couldn't stop myself from adding a few more touches. I'm out of excuses now! Pink aside, I'm adding the final touches to the rest of the character, making sure not to neglect the feet and adding in some nice details to her shoes, possibly some sort of anti-gravity magnetic thing going on there, maybe?

I'm finishing off the under lighting and also adding in another soft, blue rim light on her side, just to help her pop a little more. ●

PRO TIP

Keep it simple

I try not to get too bogged down with too many brushes. Custom brushes are great and you can add some great textures with them, but I'm not sure how helpful they are when you're first starting out. I'd definitely recommend keeping your brushes fairly simple and honing your craft before you try using every custom brush that you can get your hands on. A fancy brush will never rescue a dodgy painting!

The Artist

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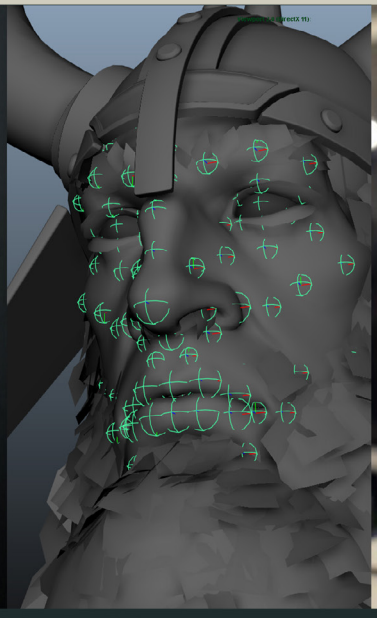

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Paint fantastical cities

Fictional universes are often used in games and films, with fantasy being a popular theme. They are made up of many different features such as characters, environments and vehicles, and it is important that all these elements work together to create a believable environment and society to engage the audience. In this tutorial, YongSub Noh takes a comprehensive look at creating a fantasy world from a concept perspective, and investigates the processes and techniques that can be used to create an epic fortress

The Artist

YongSub Noh
Web: http://yong.cghub.com

Software Used:
Adobe Photoshop

YongSub Noh is a self-taught, 3D animation artist from South Korea. He currently works for NCsoft and enjoys playing PC games, playing the drums and working on concept art in his spare time.

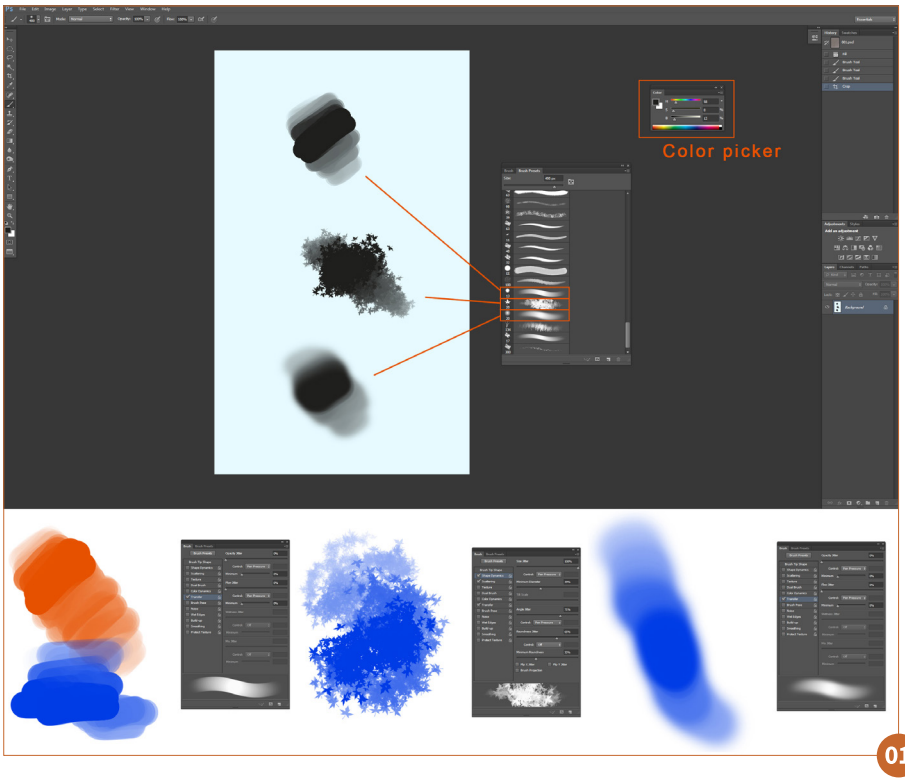
YongSub Noh reveals his digital-painting secrets for creating an epic fortress.

I'm tackling a medieval European fantasy theme, which famous works such as *The Lord of the Rings*, *Guild Wars*, and *World of Warcraft* are based on. This is a popular theme used in modern digital art, so all concept artists will likely embark on it at some point.

Concept

The first step is to visualize your city in your head. I decide to aim for a general outdoor view of a fortress city with a high and strong wall. To add a little exotic flavor, I can use an Islamic style.

You may imagine a more detailed city, or only a rough outline, or a different shape, perspective or style. This is fine; there is no right or wrong answer in concept art!



01

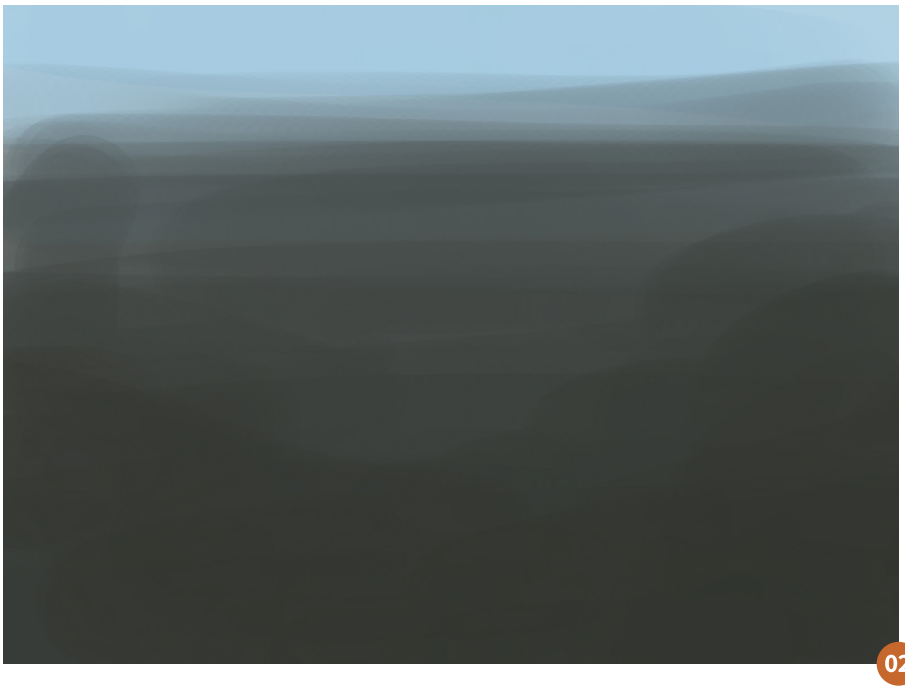
01 **Setting up:** Before we start, I will briefly show you how I set up my Photoshop work space. This is just one sample reference, so you don't have to follow exactly what I do. You have got your own working style, so set it up as you like!

The software I am using is Photoshop CS6. From the screenshot you can see three types of brushes and a floating Color Picker with HSB sliders. I like using the HSB sliders as you can set the color with H, adjust the brightness with B and adjust the chroma with S. It can be a little tricky when adjusting values on a small area, but it can be surprisingly handy when you get used to it.

Actually, there are many more convenient plug-ins out there, but I'm an old-fashioned artist using only default functions in Photoshop! I just customize them to fit my own preference. I click on Transfer and change the pressure option to Pen Pressure for those three brushes, and for the Leaf brush, I check Shape Dynamics and Scattering, then allocate appropriate values.

Aside from that, there's no special setting apart from assigning a few hotkeys, expanding History States from Preferences and un-checking the Use Graphics Processor box.

The reason why I suggest this simple and plain setting is because I want you to focus on improving your basic skills rather than getting techniques from the actual tools. There are many different settings and various external plug-ins, but as an experienced artist I suggest you concentrate on improving basic skills first. Basics are first; learning techniques are secondary.



02

02 **Background color:** First, I spread my chosen background colors on the canvas. The area with dark green color will be the ground and the area with blue color will be the sky.

Try to make the canvas size as large as possible; this example is 8000 x 6000 pixels. Environment concepts might require more detail than character concepts, and if the canvas is not large enough then you might not be able to express your work in any degree of detail. And of course, bigger-sized pictures can be used better in many ways, so just work with a large canvas all the time!

03 **City silhouette:** After laying the base color, I start work on sketching the silhouette of the city.

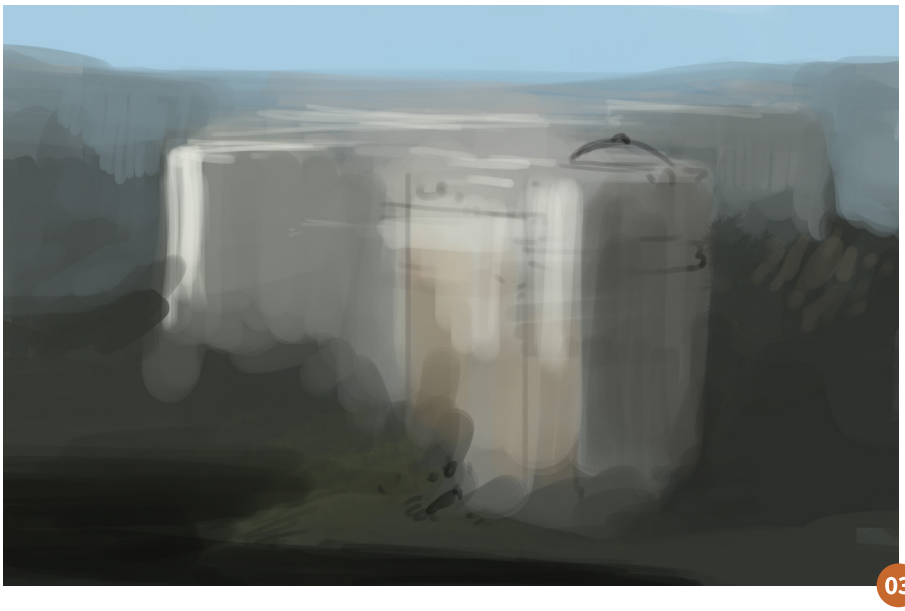
Set a bigger brush size here and start sketching. Remember, you don't need to think of all the details here. It's better to sketch large masses that give a sense of volume, and also consider the direction of the light. Also, you need to think about the color and atmosphere of the city.

I'm experienced enough with this job so I don't set the vanishing point, but if you're not comfortable with capturing the correct

> **"When you sketch architecture, it's very common to use styles that already exist in the real world"**

perspectives; draw some basic vanishing points on the canvas. Some artists solve that problem by using 3D tools and making 3D models.

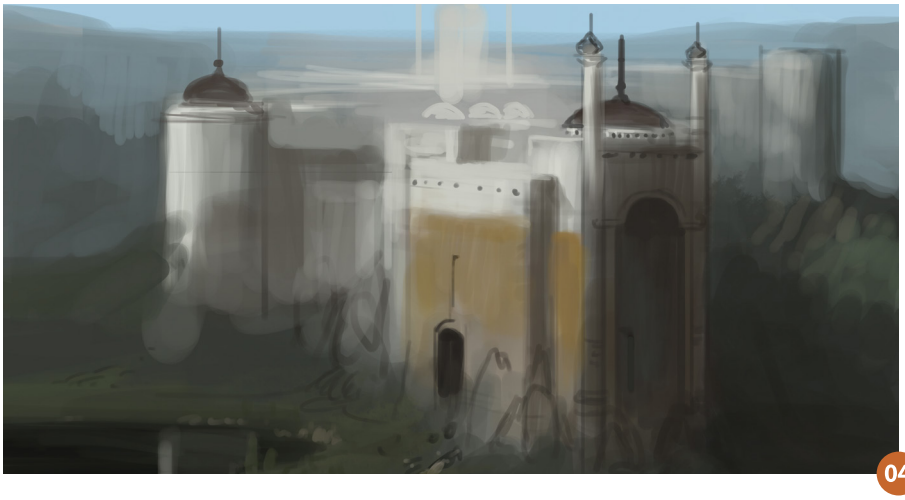
When my city is mostly blocked in, I add a lake to the forefront of my picture.



03

04 **Defining shapes:** I now start adding a little more definition to the shapes in the city. As I mentioned earlier, I'm using an Islamic style, so I start work on this by putting domes, pillars and arches in the scene. I also give some more shapes to the terrain. Now the city behind the lake is being created.

When you sketch architecture, it's very common to use styles that already exist in the real world. So if you seek to become a professional environment concept artist, it's a good idea to study the styles of architecture throughout history. It's hardly possible to create a perfect original style of architecture without referring to existing ones. Often, even if you think you did create an original style, you might be unconsciously inspired by an existing style. So my advice is to put as much reference material in your head as possible.



04

05 **Starting small details:** Now I am going to move on to the smaller details. When you draw something, it is important to draw in a balanced way. If you become obsessed with more detail in one area, or focus on detail over proportion, you might lose the overall balance. It is better practice to start with a large, blocked mass and eventually move your focus to detail.

Some of you might be curious about layers. In my case, I don't use layers very often as it feels unnatural and so makes my work timid. When painters paint in the real world using tangible materials, there are no layers. Of course, I sometimes use layers when I need to draw something very small and sophisticated that would jeopardize my work if done wrong; when I've done the job though, I merge those layers and start with the one canvas again. I'm not telling you this is the right way; it depends entirely on your work style.

I don't think in too much detail during this planning stage. I prefer to jump in with a few basic ideas, and then add and fix things as I progress.

06 **Achieving reality:** I then fix the appearance of the city and add reed beds between the lake and the city. At this stage, you can begin to imagine how this concept art will look in its final stage.

When I draw something, the most important element I want to get across is a feeling of reality. No matter how great the other elements like shape, color and composition are, if they don't fit together and come across as natural in your scene, they mean nothing. Even though the ▶

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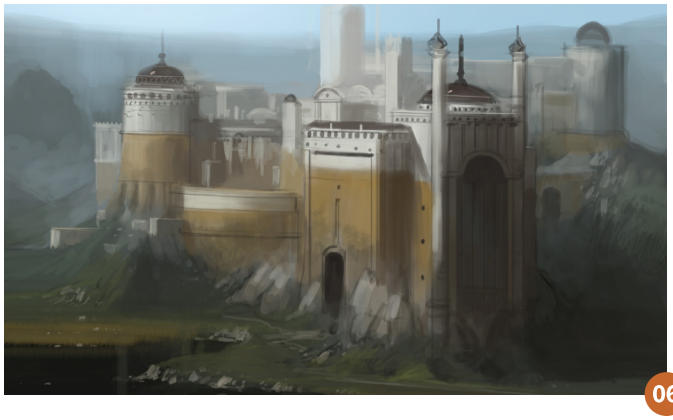


06

subject is boring and ordinary, it can still impress people if it's expressed realistically.

07 **Perspective:** In addition, perspective and a sense of space are also essential elements when creating scenery and architecture.

You feel a sense of depth when recognizing the space between objects. The depth of a building can be expressed by light and darkness, but when you draw a landscape you need to focus on perspective and a sense of space.

As I'm drawing clear and bright weather, I'm drawing closer objects vividly and drawing distant objects blurry. To learn more about perspectives and a sense of space, keep observing your surroundings in real life, and scenes in pictures and photos.

08 **More details:** I decide to add some more detail to the sky, so I just extend the upper area of the canvas. It's important to keep a flexible mind when judging your image; it's perfectly normal to fix aspects of your image as you go along. There is no such thing as a perfect picture or a perfect linear progress.

I can now start to polish and add more detail to certain areas of my image. As this is a city and therefore has multiple components, it has a very complex structure and composition. There are huge examples of sweeping architecture and also tiny, detailed buildings, so I have to take good care to keep these components clear and separate in order to create a sense of detail and realism in the work.

07

09 **Creating ambiance:** It's now about 80% complete. After polishing details of the city, it's time to express an ambiance.

I didn't start with a specific ambiance in mind, but in reality concept art doesn't feel right without expressing an ambiance. I decide to add in some

08

wet fog and vapor to indicate the ambiance experienced in the early morning. I paint the wet fog in a light blue color with a soft brush, and add some sunlight of a light yellow color above it all to make a delicate and bright impression.

10 **Lighting and layers:** I add two layers of wet fog and sunlight in the Layer tab on the right-hand side. I set those two layers to Hard Light. Hard Light is a very useful tool for expressing lights, and I use it a lot in my work.

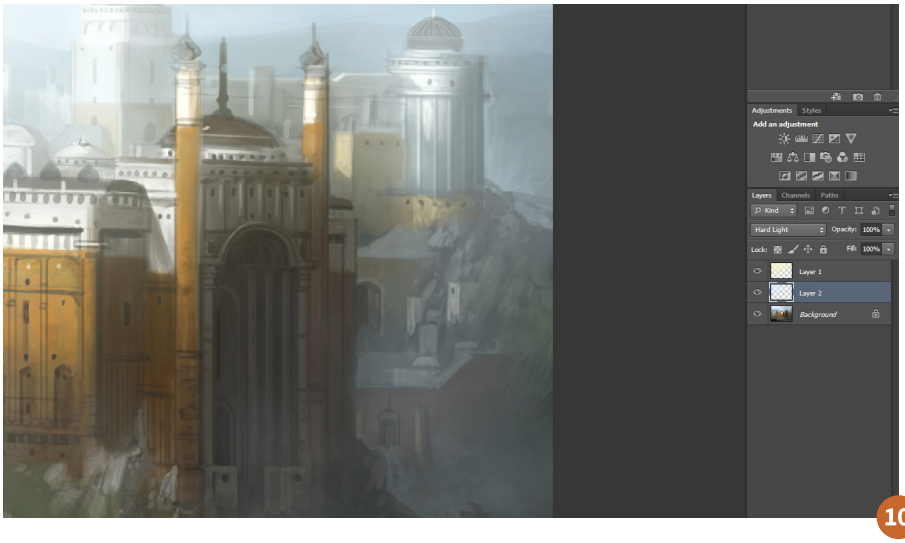
I mentioned before that when I do use layers, I usually merge them afterwards. This time, I will not merge them as those light and fog layers affect the whole picture. Having them on the same layer will make it difficult to edit the city.

11 **Finalizing the ambiance:** Now I have finished adding the ambiance. Wet fog from the lake and ground, heavy vapor in the air and a strong, bright light give an impression of a moist morning. I also add some flying birds.

12 **Revising the atmosphere:** To me it is a little murky for the atmosphere I was looking to create, so I revise that blurry and murky tone.

To do this, I tie every layer into one group layer, and I copy that group layer. I then merge the group layer into a new layer using the Merge Group function. If I change that new layer to Soft Light, and add the saturation and contrast changes, it creates a less murky effect. This technique enables you to do a tone revision without affecting your original work. ●

09



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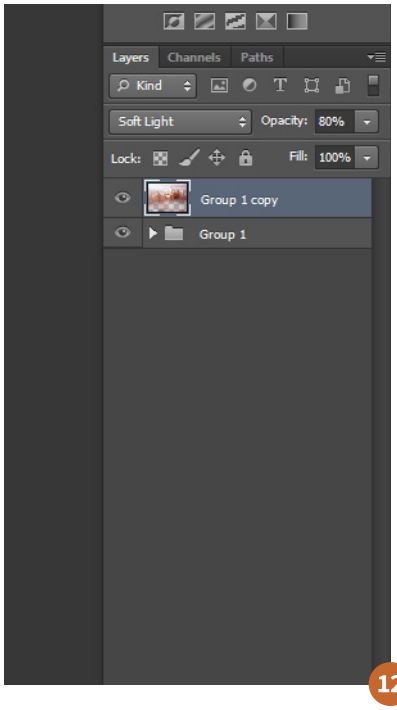

12

“When I draw something, the most important element I want to get across is a feeling of reality”

The Artist

YongSub Noh
Web: http://yong.cghub.com

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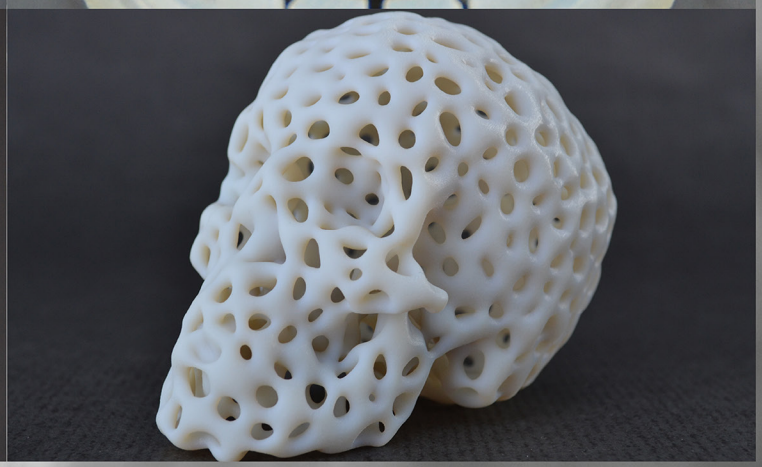

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The Artist

Ahmed Aldoori
Web: http://medders.deviantart.com

Software Used:
Adobe Photoshop CS6

Ahmed Aldoori is an illustrator/designer working in Los Angeles on various projects. He is currently designing content within the theme park industry.

Create sinister attire

Costume design is an important element to character design as it helps to enhance a character's personality. You can create an evolving plot of color, and even change the social status or period through the visual design of garments and accessories. In this tutorial, Ahmed Aldoori describes the painting of a character from a fantasy medieval world, complete with clothing suitable for that character's job description. And the character? A jester!

01

02

Ahmed shows you how to concept and illustrate a medieval jester

Research is important to serve as a foundation for creativity, so I find myself looking at old medieval paintings as a start. Sure, I could just copy a jester's costume directly from reference and called it done, but that would be boring. We, as artists, have the opportunity to take something and put an interesting spin on it to fit a character. In this tutorial you will find the development of loose pencil drawings into a more refined design in the end.

It's important to get a feel for the character's emotions. We want this jester to be a sinister type who despises everyone. He's a court fool, after all. Conveying this idea is supported by sketching facial expressions within the design process.

Even though they won't all make it to the final illustration, it's beneficial to feel that the character has emotion while you're designing the costume. Otherwise it will feel like you're designing a costume tailored for a blank mannequin.

An understanding of anatomy is a required skill for this type of design. Without knowing how the human body works, a cool-looking costume in a still image could end up completely useless when it comes to being animated for human movement.

Photoshop knowledge is also important for this process. I will be using layers, levels and blending options to help me with my design. Enjoy!

PRO TIP

Research and collect references

Your designs will only be as good as what you know. You should always be on the lookout for new content as well as old. Your mental library will kick in when an assignment is handed to you. It is up to you to update what you know by studying different things.

Having said that, do drawing studies from life instead of photos. Your brain will retain something from real life much better than from a flat 2D image; your eyes can see depth and will perceive an object in its entirety, rather than flat shapes on a print or screen.

01 **Exploration sketch phase:** You'll find a variety of different jester designs from history. There are extravagant costumes that include all kinds of silk and silver bells, and there are simpler costumes that appear to be made out of rags.

In these sketches I am figuring out different hat designs, as well as fabric configurations. The expressions on the faces help me solidify the jester as a real character. Props are important too; a lot of the jesters had some kind of rod with a mask on it representing a smaller version of them to add to the whimsical entertainment they provide for royalty.

02 **More pencil drawing:** In addition to using the expressions to help solidify the character, the poses are important as well. It helps to think about the character in motion; in this case the jester could be performing in front of his audience.

I've chosen to give him an angry look to indicate the resentment he holds towards everyone. ▶

The evil smile in the top right can really sell that idea of him being truly sinister; it's universally understood. Stay away from anyone that looks at you like that! On the bottom right I have made a smaller version of him.

03 **Pose specific to the final:** The next few steps only need the basic Brush tool with pen Opacity turned on. These poses have been drawn with the final image in mind. Whatever the final illustration is it must showcase the costume completely for the art director or 3D modeler to understand.

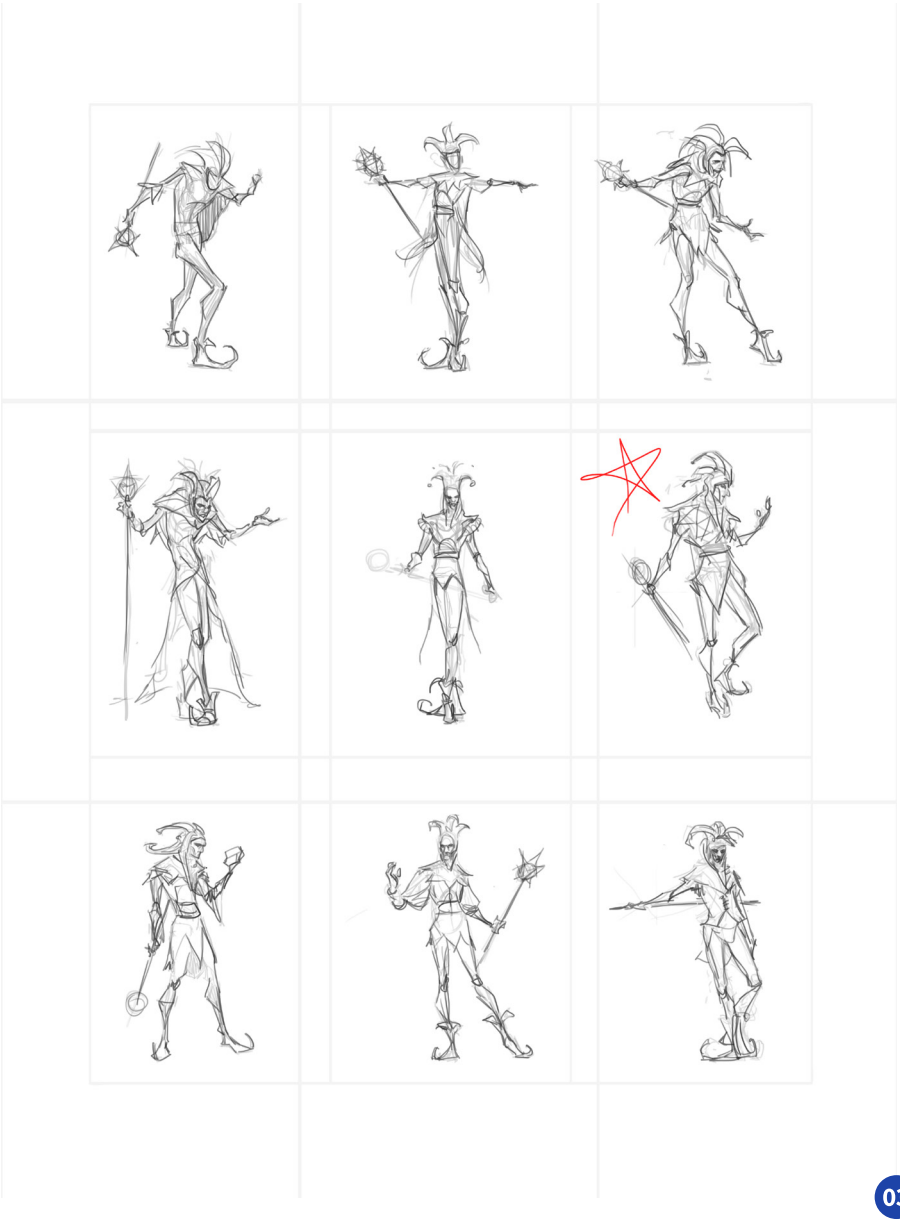
With this in mind, I avoid poses that cover up important parts of the design. A typical T-pose is an option, but I want to make this look interesting, so I go with the more pensive stance. It's important to flush out a lot of different pose possibilities.

04 **Pose refinement phase:** I lower the opacity of the thumbnail from the previous step and make a new layer on top to draw another pass of the design. I take the creepy face I drew before and use it as reference for this. It is drawn at a different angle here.

For the masked rod I draw a geometrical frame with symmetry to act as a placeholder for the mask to be drawn in perspective. It's better to lay down a foundation to help guide your drawing, rather than trying to draw it without a framework.

05 **Refinement round two:** I do the previous step again on top of the first drawing pass. This allows for another layer of specificity. The main difference you can see here is form indication. The jester hat is a complex object so it requires some planning.

I have the hat shape drawn out from before; the form was slightly suggested, but here the wireframe lines help make a clear statement of its volume. You'll see on the floor a grid sketched beneath him to indicate perspective. This will ground your figure so that he seems to be



03

04

05

03 –I've drawn these as small thumbnails in order to avoid getting caught up in details. The gesture of the jester is the important factor in this phase.

04 – The thumbnail underneath has a low opacity; it eventually fades away when I do this step again on top of this drawing.

05 – Once again, this pass will slightly fade away as the next drawing pass comes into play. This is a building process; one step lays the foundation for the next.

> **"It is important to be smart with value placement. If the darks are too evenly distributed you will lose movement and focus, unless having a bland design is the intention"**

standing on actual ground rather than floating in the air.

06 **A bit of tone and value:** Again, the opacity of the previous step is lowered. This time I draw in the triangular patterns on the jester's costume and fill it in with value. The value breakup will help you control the focal point.

It is important to be smart with value placement. If the darks are too evenly distributed you will lose movement and focus, unless having a bland design is the intention. But we want this character to stand out. You'll notice that I've drawn the mask on the side. This was easier to draw on a flat view, which will be put in place using Free Transform.

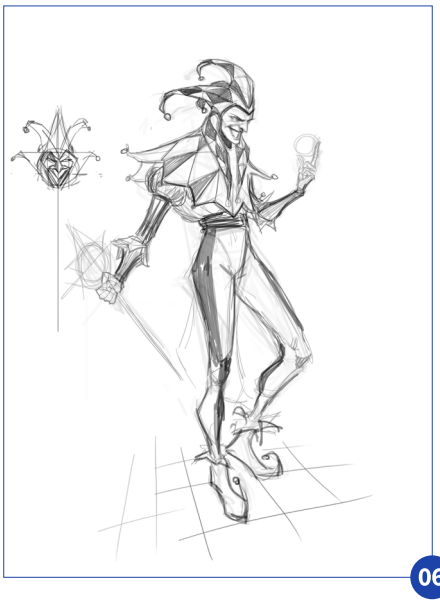
07 **Transform into perspective:** Up until now the only Photoshop tools I have used are the basic brush and layers. In this step I use the Free Transform tool to place the mask onto the rod in perspective.

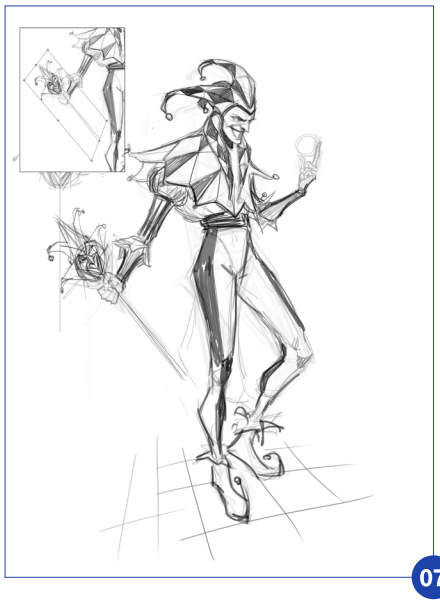
Press Cmd + T (Ctrl + T if you are using a Windows PC) and a bounding box will appear, you can hold Cmd (or Ctrl), and click and drag the corners into any perspective. Once you are happy with the placement, you can double-click within the box or hit Enter to finalize the transformation. This is very useful for placing things into perspective.

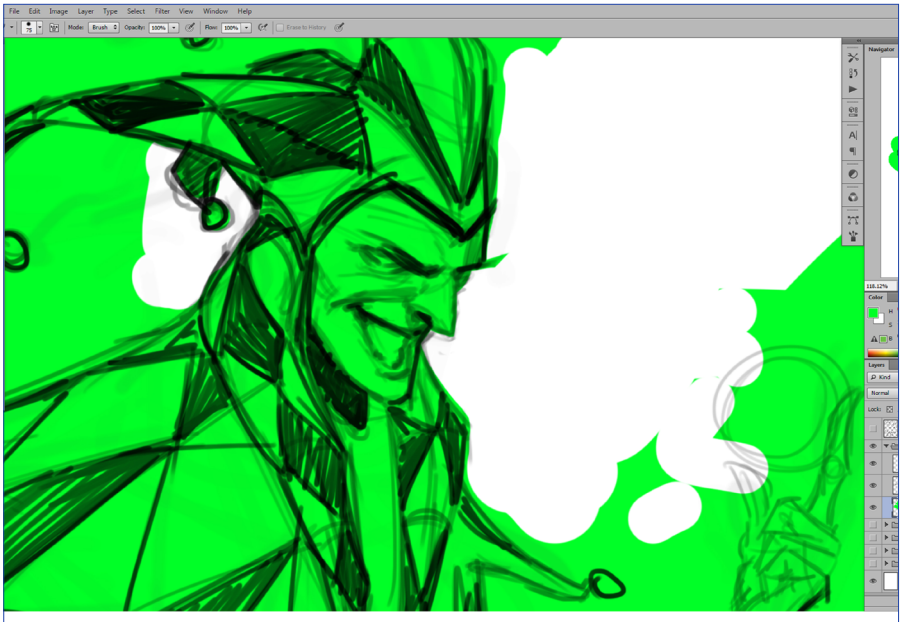
08 **Masking the jester:** Making a mask for your design will make painting it a lot easier. The purpose of this is to make a sharp silhouette under the line drawing and to keep it on its own layer. I use a Clipping Mask layer above the silhouette to get the line drawing confined into the silhouette.

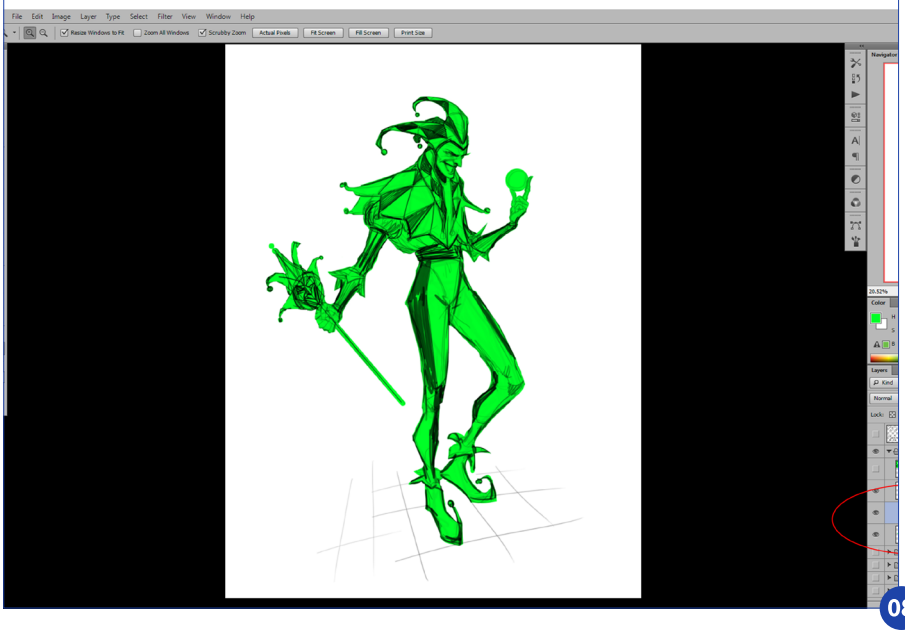
You can do this above any layer by holding Alt and clicking between the two layers. You can create multiple layers this way and whatever you paint will stay within the silhouette. I have chosen green arbitrarily; it can be any color.

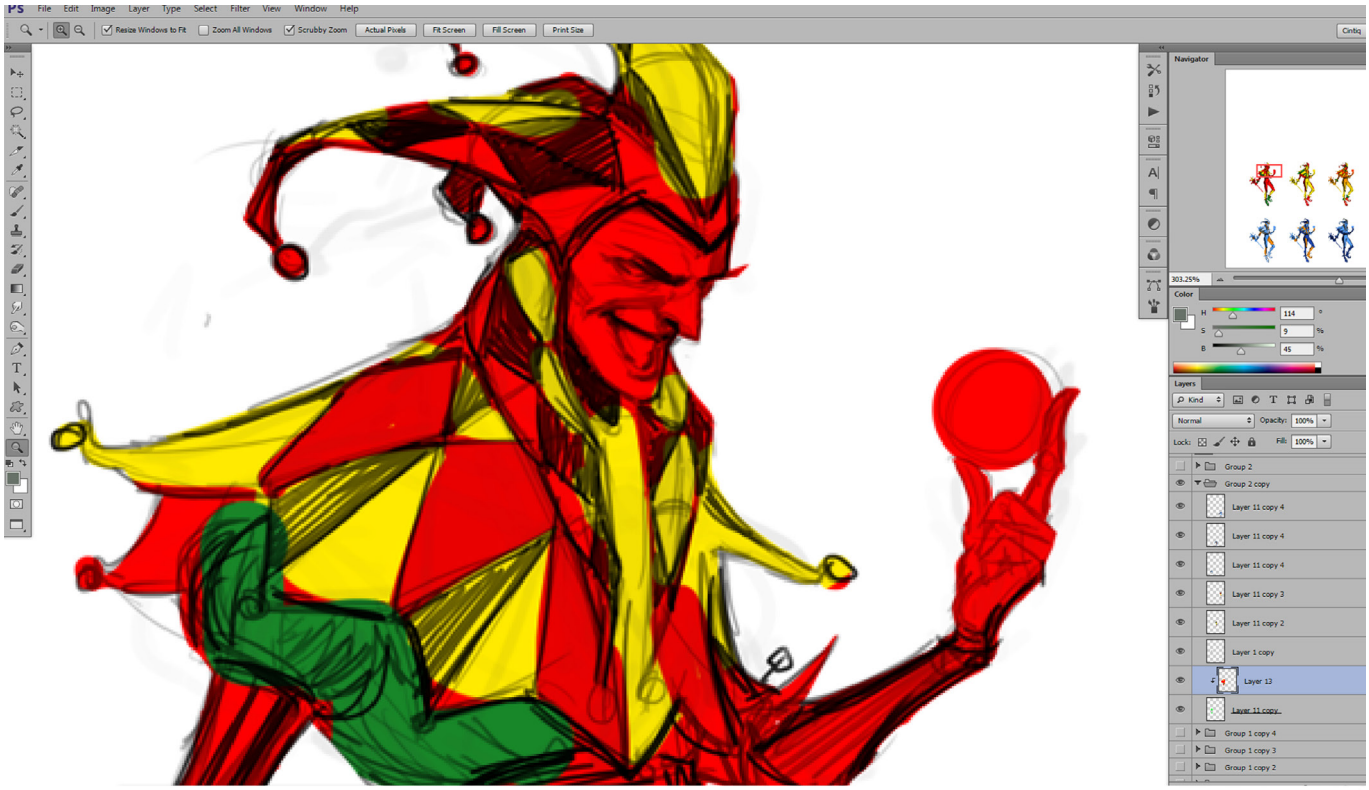
09 **Color thumbnail exploration– warm and cool:** Coming up with a decent color scheme can be difficult at first. However, if you simplify the process to a few colors, you can come up with many variations to choose from. ▶







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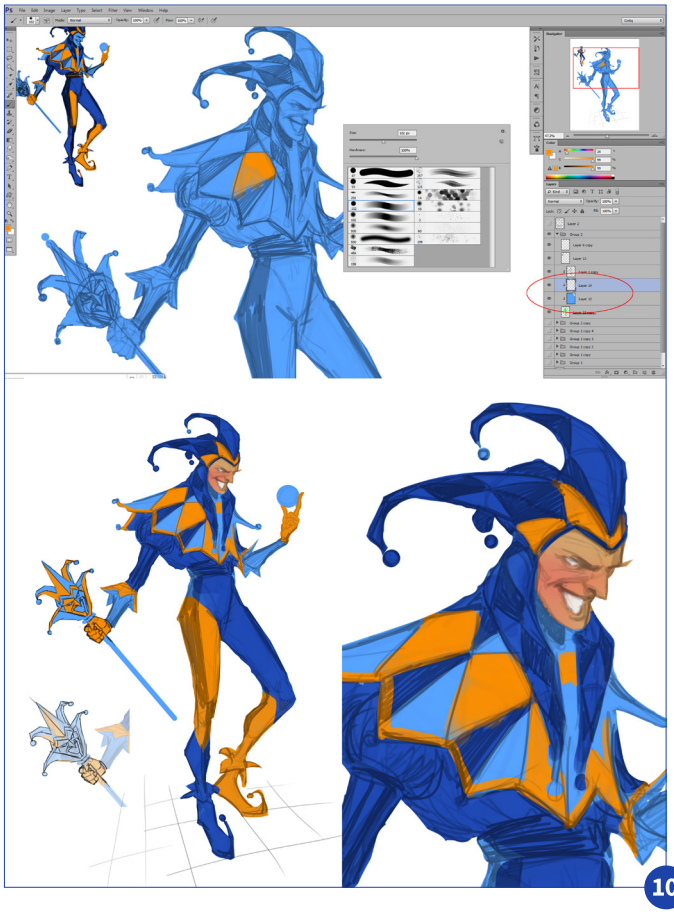

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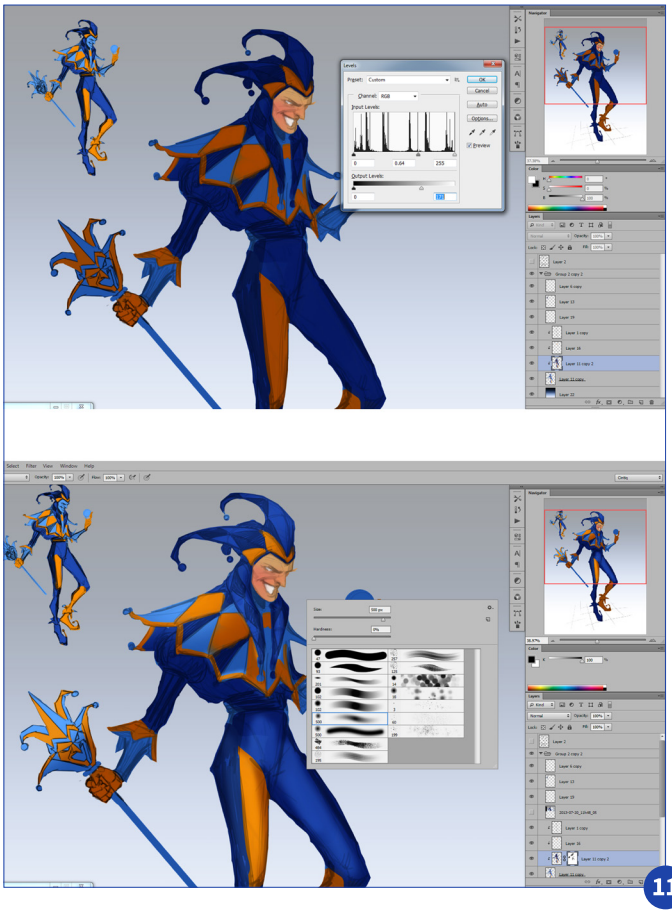

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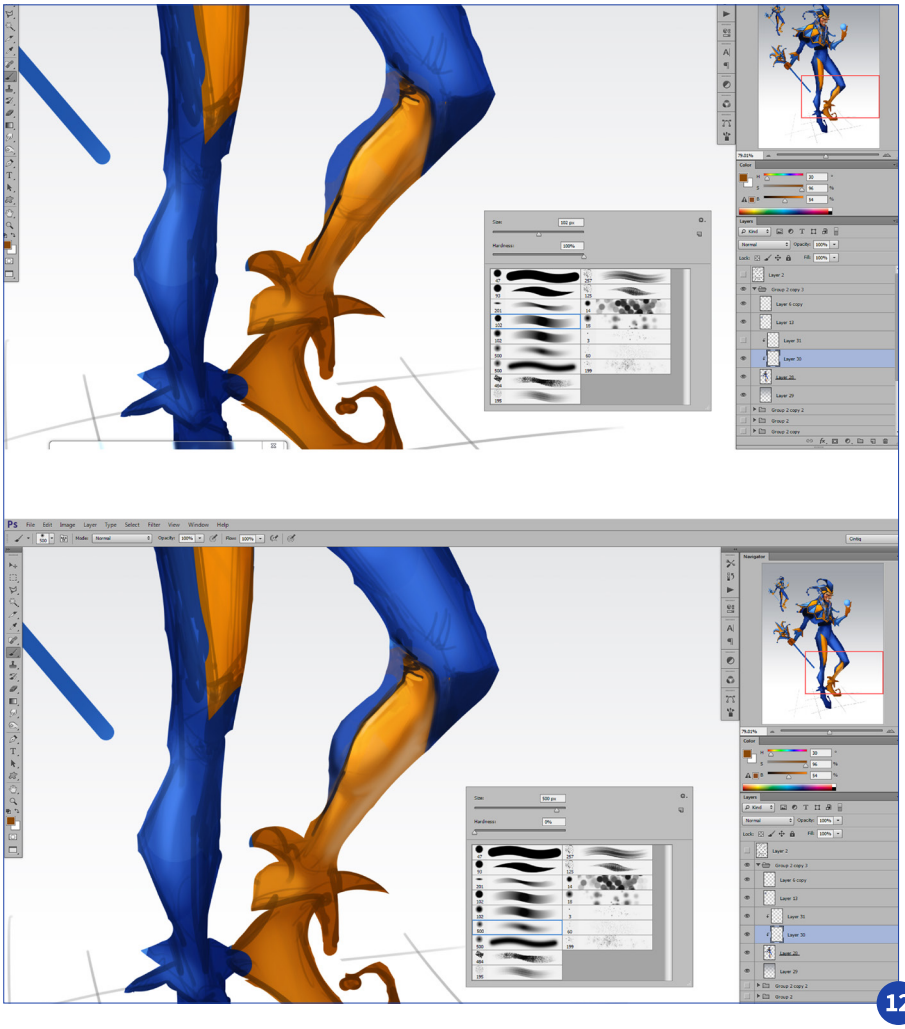
The first three are dominant with warm colors, green being a cool color accent. In the references I collected I have noticed that the majority of the jester color schemes contain reds, yellows, and greens. I want to make an interesting change to the typical colors, so I try cool colors being dominant, accented by a warm orange. It seems out of place, and I like it.

10 **Blocking in colors:** I place the color thumbnail in the corner of my big image as a reference. I use the basic round brush to block in the colors in the clipping mask. It might be helpful at first to keep each color set on its own layer: blues on one layer, yellows on another and so on.

At this point there is no need to model or render the forms. Flat coloring will set the local color for the design, which will then be manipulated using level adjustments. I recommend avoiding fancy texture brushes when doing this.

11 **Lighting and form:** Here's the fun stuff, the good ol' one-two punch. This secret move will help you move forward with your paintings very quickly. Simply duplicate your flats and use Level adjustments to make it halfway darker. This will make all the shadows equally dark, setting a unified value range for all the darks. ▶



12

You simply erase out where you want light to go. I use the airbrush as an eraser to shine light onto the costume. Instead of using just the eraser, you can also use something called a layer mask if you're familiar with that. Both methods work great.

12 **Clothing indication and bounce light:** Clothing has thickness, and should be indicated as such. Once again I use the basic round brush. Wherever the cloth meets at a seam, I indicate a lip where the stitching might be. Wrinkles are slightly indicated as well. The purpose of this is to avoid having a design with flat shapes that are seamless.

Bounce light will assist you in showing the form of the clothing as well. I use the airbrush to paint a soft light coming from below. This also helps indicate the cloth's material, which in this case has a silky reflectivity.

13 **Costume refinement and details:** Here I paint some more of the costume's design elements. Jesters always have interesting patterns and shapes. I highlight the triangular design language on the hat by outlining the dark shapes with a yellow line. This could end up being some kind of embroidery or just flat color, depending on the level of detail that the video game allows.

I also start painting the face, which also has an angular language to flow with the rest of the design. I don't want to over-paint the face since the more important factor for this project is the costume the jester is wearing.

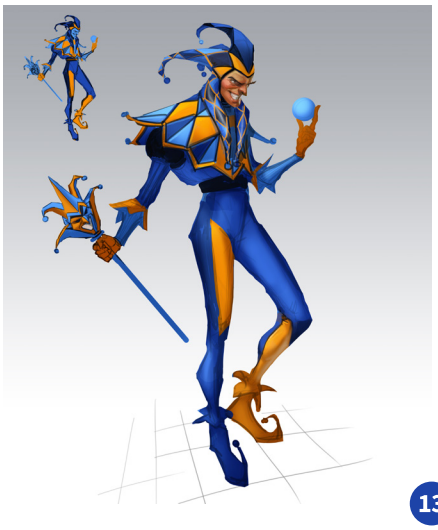
14 **Shadows in perspective:** Here is a neat trick that will make your character seem to be placed in an actual space. Since I already have the silhouette cut out from the early steps, it will suffice as a semi-accurate shadow shape. Simply duplicate the silhouette, and use Free Transform (Cmd + T, or Ctrl + T) and squash everything down beneath the character.

You can then paint in a solid gray color onto the whole thing using the same clipping mask methods as before. You can erase away any parts that do not make sense, like the shadow of his leg sticking out.

15 **Three paintings in one:** Earlier I mentioned the option of color shifting your costume to explore other colors. This is a really quick way of implying that you did a ton of work, wink wink!

Since we have the face separate from the costume, we can turn that layer off and mess around with the hue shift (Cmd + U, or Ctrl + U). This will expose new color schemes that you may never have thought of or seen.

There is also a dropdown menu within the Hue/Saturation window, so you can select specific colors to change; if you want only the blues to shift it will lock every color except blue. ●



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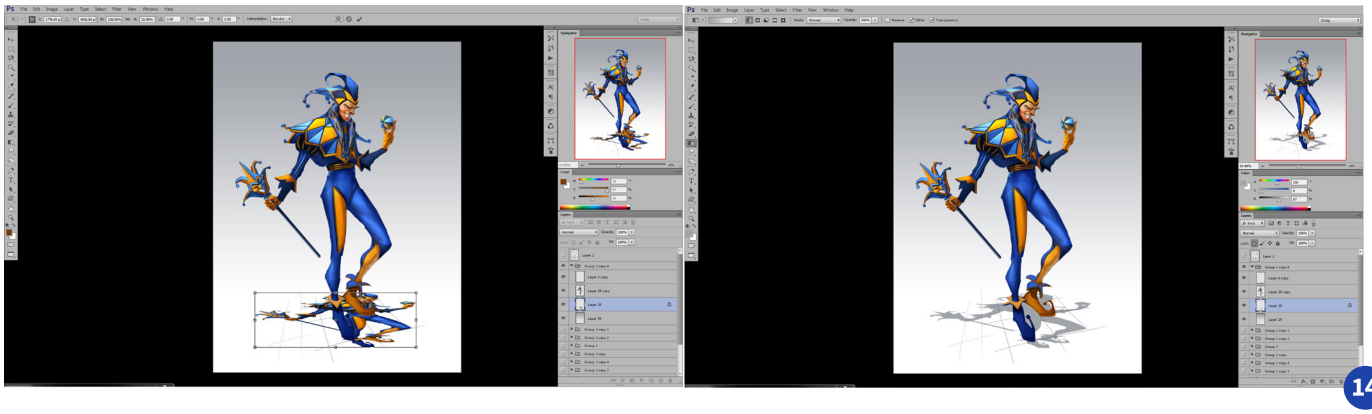
PRO TIP

Step back a minute!

Take breaks often! Staring at an image for a long time can cause your brain to ignore obvious mistakes. It's essential to walk away from your artwork so that you can get a fresh look at your design when you return.

Stay alive by doing small physical exercises to keep your brain function at its top performance; health is an often overlooked necessity in doing good artwork. Being physically active in a sedentary workplace can be hard, but do whatever it takes!



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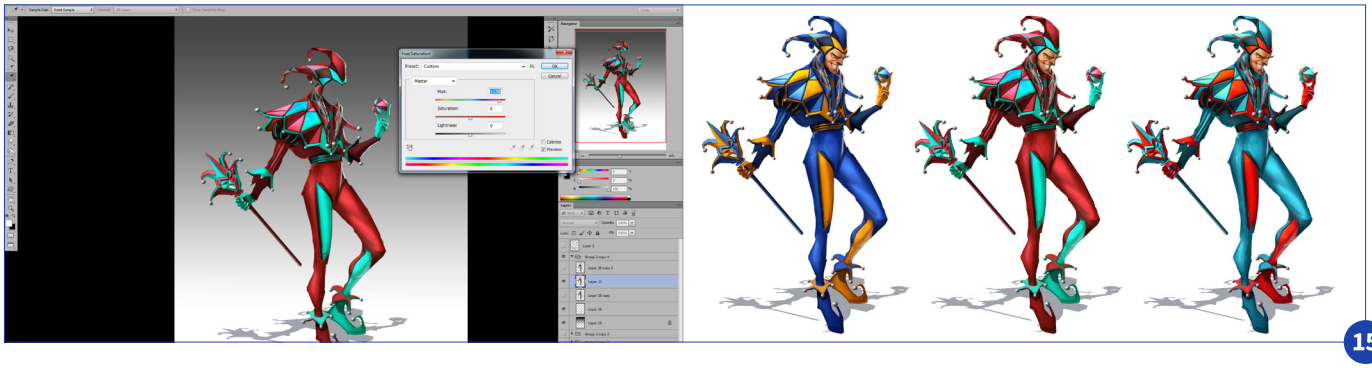

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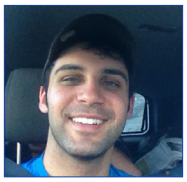
The Artist



Ahmed Aldoori
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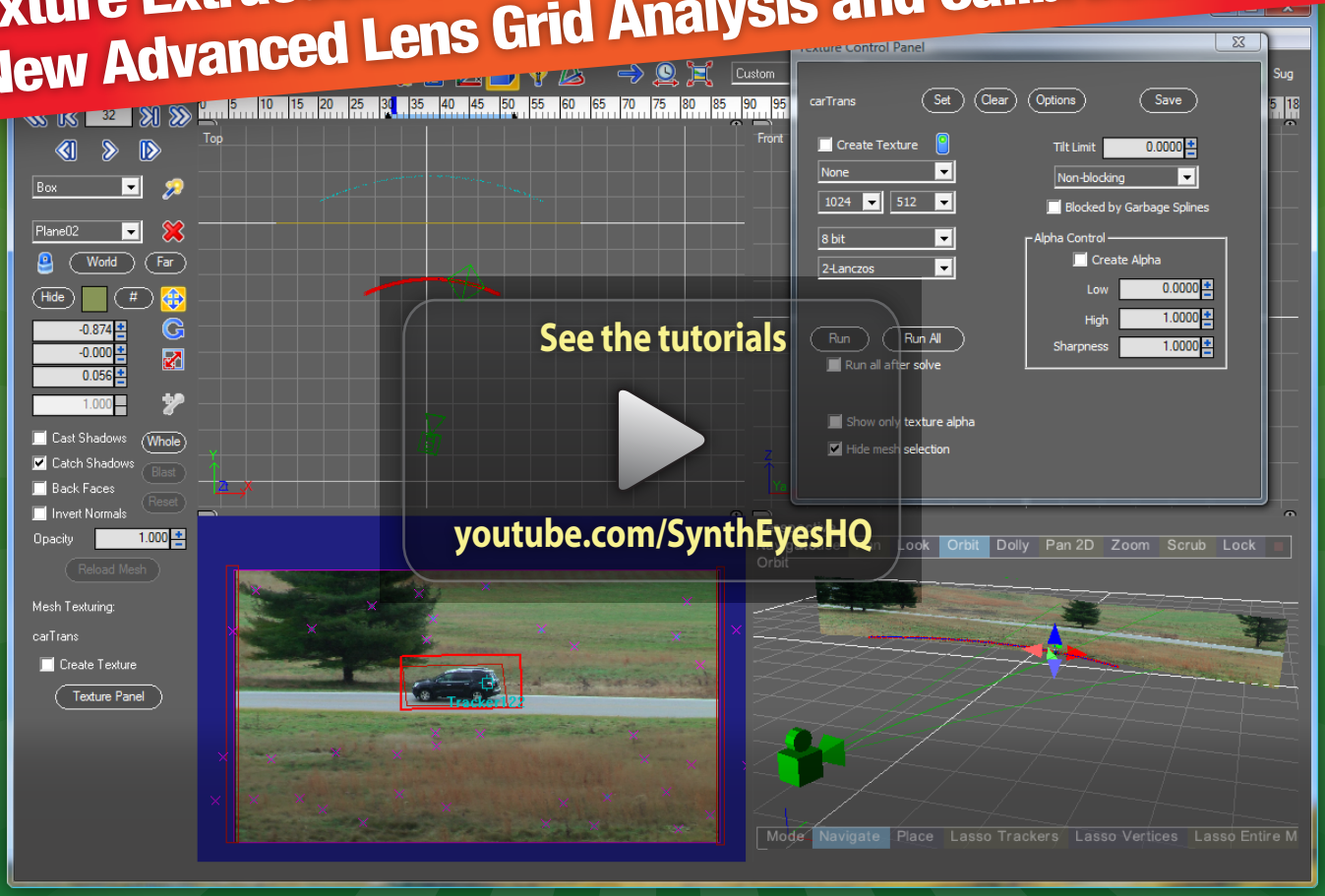

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The Artist

Fernando Acosta
Web: www.facosta.com

Software Used:
Adobe Photoshop

Fernando Acosta is a concept artist in the video game industry. Originally from Colombia (South America), Fernando began his career as an electrical engineer, before moving on to work as a storyboard artist and illustrator. He's been working as a concept artist in Canada for the past five years now and his credits include titles such as *Halo 4: Crimson Map Packs*, *Star Trek* and *Warframe*. He has also designed some G.I. JOE figures for Hasbro's Pursuit of Cobra toy line.

Develop victorious personalities

Shapes, color and theory are an important part of character design. You can create a feeling of good or evil in visual design by changing the combination of these. In this tutorial, Fernando Acosta reveals his industry techniques when depicting a bold hero, conveying the key elements that will typically make heroic traits recognizable

01

Fernando leads a step-by-step tutorial on the creation of a true hero, Gladius...

Gladius was described as being tall and lean, with his form of attack incorporating sharp-edged weapons. With other design aspects left open to my discretion, let's do this!

01 **Thumbs:** After reading the brief I decided to start sketching some ideas. I came up with these three thumbs. I was looking for some poses that would show the character in an action setting and that would also be able to show a bit of his personality. Since he has sharp weapons I tried to incorporate them into the silhouette of his design as well.

I liked the middle one the best. It reminded me of the old master paintings of the hero, victorious after a battle. So I decided to run with it.

02 **Line art:** The next step was to blow the thumbnail up and do a line drawing over it. I just lowered the opacity in Photoshop, made a new layer and did a line pass.

While I was drawing him, I was thinking about the character itself. Who was he? What did he do?

PRO TIP

I tend to flip my images all the time to make sure they are working from all angles. I usually have F11 as a hotkey for it and then I just map it onto my tablet or Cintiq.

02

03

04

These were the questions I needed to answer before I started refining him further. So I thought that maybe he could be a sword master. He collected all sorts of blades and swords from around his world, and just kept adding them to his costume.

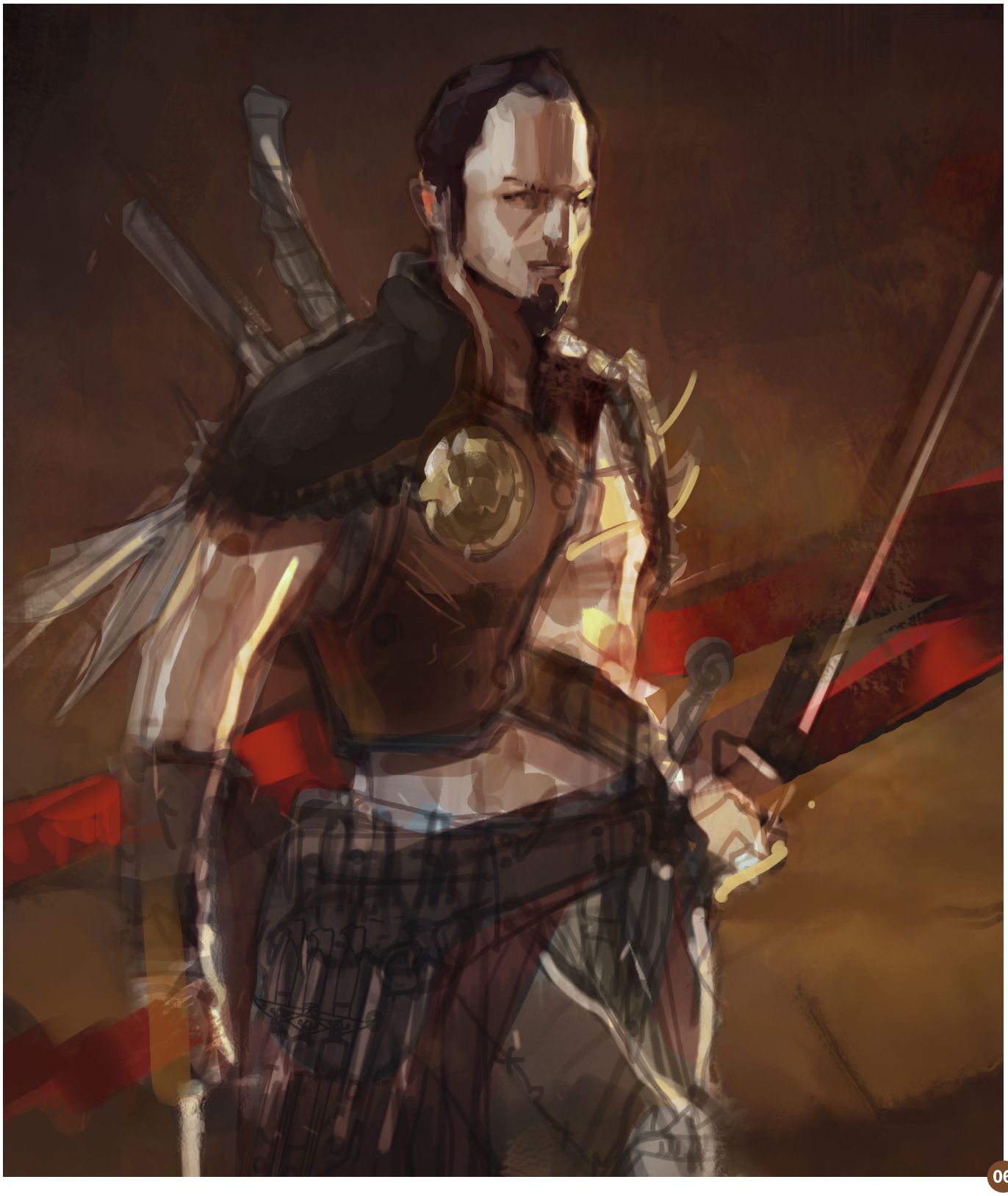
I wanted the setting to be a *Mad Max*-like fantasy world. So the costume was crafted in a similar way, out of different materials and parts he has found along the way.

03 **Rough colors:** I then multiplied the line art over the thumbnail and, using a combination of Overlay layers and Color Balance adjustment layers, I started to lay in the color. Using some textured brushes I started to add paint opaquely and also started to work on the image's background.

04 **Rim light:** Upon looking at the image, I noticed I was going to need a justification for that rim light. I experimented a bit with a sunset in the sky, but ended up deciding that maybe some spread out fires on the ground would make for a cooler visual. The fires would also help reinforce the "victorious after a long battle" idea. So I added some textures, as well as using some textured brushes to lay the foundation for the fires.

05 **Reference:** I took a picture of my anatomy tools busts, for reference. These

05



06

little guys are a great way of playing with your lighting setup. I normally have a lamp light shine down on them to act as my key light and then I use my monitor as a rim light.

06 **Face block-in:** After I set my references up, I started working on the face. All of the foundation had been laid down, so I could start refining some areas. I tend to start from the face and work my way down. I blocked in the different head planes and from then on I started refining the character.

07 **Refinement:** My whole process is typically very organic. I tend not to get too attached to the line drawing. If I put a mark that works or adds visual interest, I rather run with it.

At this stage I was also starting to think about what his costume was going to look like and what materials he may have used to construct it.

The feathers were a softer touch to his otherwise sharp weapons. A little curve-ball like that can help you say a lot about the individual inside of the character. ▶

> **"I like to finish images with final adjustment layers, Color Balance, Contrast and Brightness, Levels, etc"**

08 **Changes:** While I was working on him I noticed that his face was too generic and it was also starting to get a bit lost with the competing fire light source below. So I decided to work a bit more on his head by adding a ponytail and tattoo. This gave him a bit more character and the green-ish color of his tattoo added some contrast to reaffirm this as my main focus point. It's the only green among all the warmer colors, so it instantly tends to pop out.

09 **Final:** After I was done with the figure I played with some final touches, such as some particle FX in the air and some heat ripples in the background from the fire. I like to finish images with final adjustment layers, Color Balance, Contrast and Brightness, Levels, etc.

As my cherry on top of the cake I decided to add a bit of a Smart Sharpen filter on certain areas where I wanted it to look a bit crisper and voilà! He was done!

This was a very fun character to work on and I hope you have enjoyed my first tutorial. Thanks for reading and please feel free to visit my website for more art! ●

07

08

The Artist

Fernando Acosta
Web: www.facosta.com

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The Artist

Khasis Lieb
Web: www.khasislieb.com

Software Used:
Adobe Photoshop

A French illustrator specializing in portraits and caricatures; Khasis Lieb is also a fan of fantasy art. He lives in Paris, France and paints whenever he can.

Paint a personal portrait

French illustrator, Khasis Lieb, explains how he created his wonderfully realistic portrait *Charlotte #1*, which was inspired by a friend

Khasis Lieb describes his creative workflow when painting portraits

It's always a great opportunity to share your workflow with other artists, so I hope you'll enjoy this and learn something from it.

I often like to paint realistic portraits, and for a long time I'd been wanting to paint a particular woman, who I had a clear image of in my head (I usually have a clear image before starting a painting that will require a large amount of time and work).

This woman I wanted to paint had a leather jacket on, with a white t-shirt underneath. Her shoulders were resting against glass that reflected the night landscape of my neighborhood here in Paris. As you will see, I didn't quite end up doing that.

I started out by looking for a model. I had some ideas based on the women I see in my daily life, but I hadn't asked any of them about it yet. Then one day, on Facebook, I saw that my friend Charlotte has posted a photograph of herself, with glass behind her, but in the daytime.

I thought it was perfect, so I called her and asked if she would be okay if I painted her portrait. She was happy with the idea and we agreed on a photo shoot one night. I took more than 100 photographs of her for reference, so that I had her face from every angle and the reflection of the night in the glass etc.

01 **The painting:** I did the initial sketches in my sketchbook for once, instead of on my computer. Then I started adding some gradient to the portrait, with some night-like colors (a city at night, so kind of purplish). Then I moved on to blocking in the overall composition and light with a big brush that had a little texture in it. I wanted a front-facing portrait, kind of a Hollywood photo shoot feel, so I framed it from the waist up.

02 **Background atmosphere:** Once this quick stage was finished, I started to create some atmosphere in the background by adding blurred, lit-up signs (to achieve the feel of a photo I added some Lens Blur, with Bokeh ▶

PRO TIP

Don't stop yourself from using photo references, but don't copy them either. Understand your references, so you're free to do what you want to.

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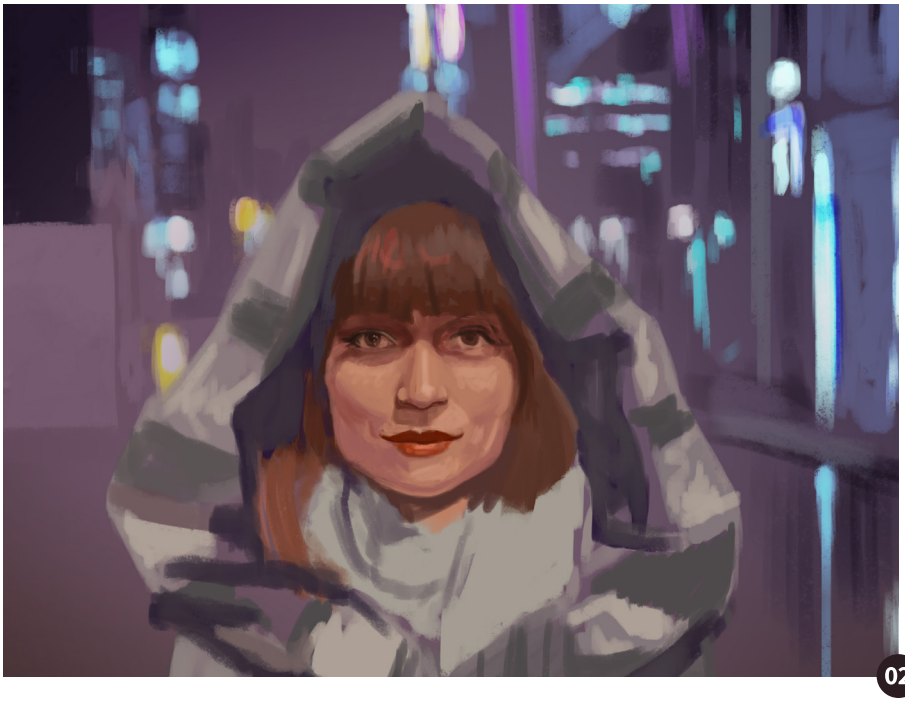

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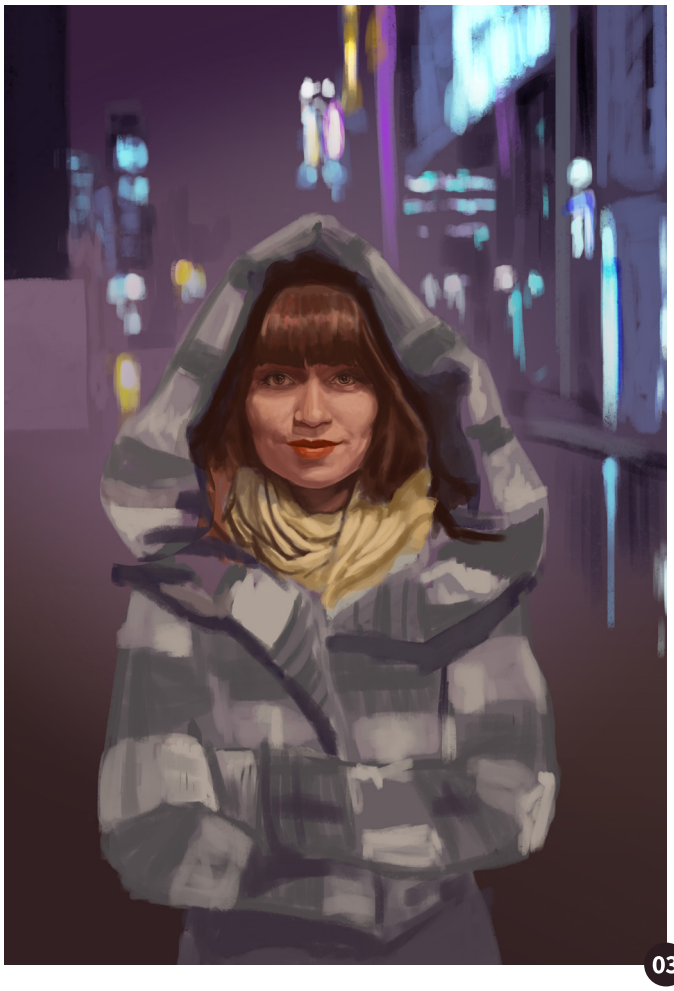

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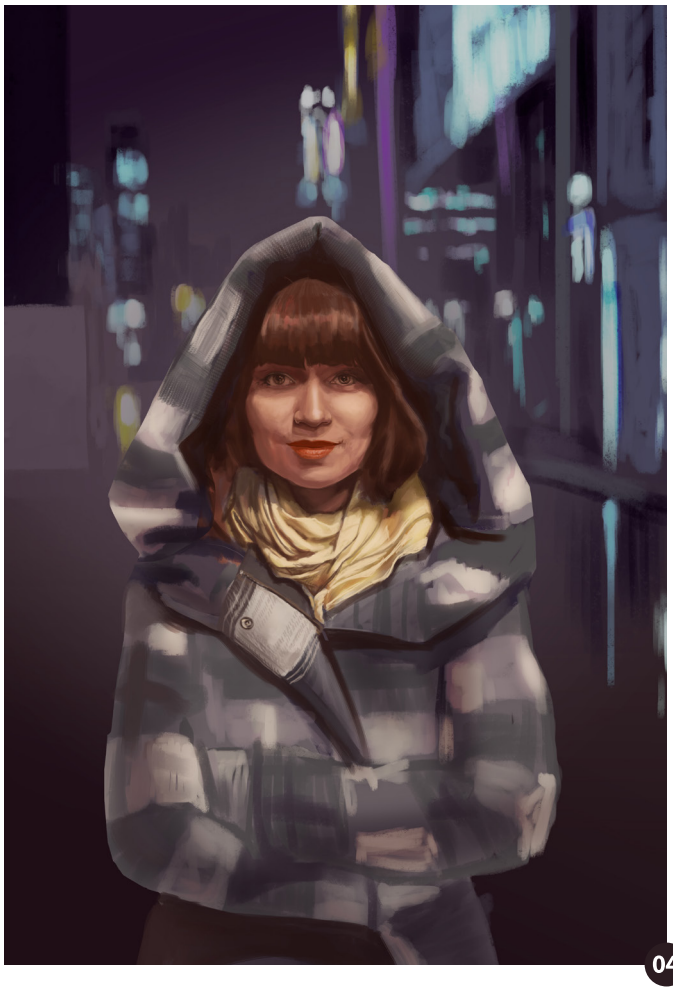

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> **"At this point I was still working on refining the face and the woman was starting to look more like Charlotte"**

and light burns), still using the big, textured brush. And of course, I began the most important part of a portrait: the face.

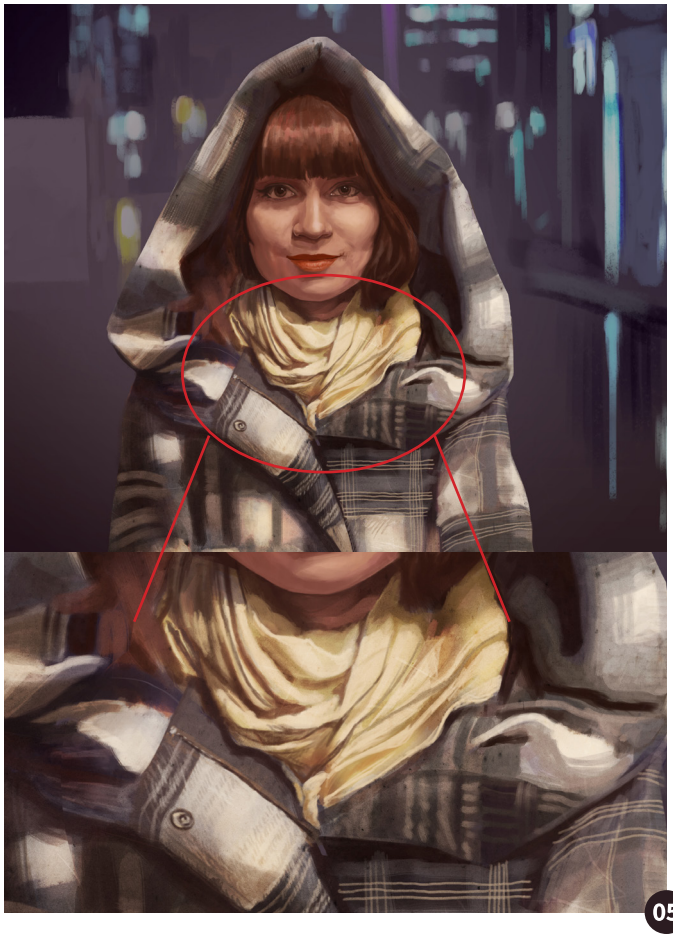
03 **Starting the face:** For the face, I used the Photoshop default brush 24 (with the Opacity Jitter added). I also did all the rest of the painting with it.

I continued re-working the proportions, the likeness, and refining areas. At this stage I had two layers (and this went on until the very final step, where I started adding some layers for details, grain, lights, etc), so the proportions of the subject could be easily re-arranged without losing any of the background, and vice-versa.

04 **Achieving a likeness:** At this point I was still working on refining the face and the woman was starting to look more like Charlotte; the lights really sculpted the volume. I also transformed the background a little bit, so the composition still worked, and I changed the hue as well, making the image more blue. I did this to achieve a sense of cold that would tie in with the fact that she was wearing a coat.

I detailed the scarf as well, and a small part of the coat, as I knew it would be huge job.

05 **Fabrics and faces:** Next I did some work on the coat again, and changed its hue. By now the overall shape had changed and the



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silhouette was more feminine. I also continued refining the face, most importantly the eyes!

The hard part about painting someone you really know, as opposed to a portrait or caricature of a celebrity, is that you have a feeling about that person and so you know when something is wrong. While working on this piece I often found myself thinking, "It's her, but it's not her – damn!"

At this point I added some texture on the scarf, so I could test some texturing of the fabric for later.

06 **Composition:** At this point the portrait had already been about 15 hours of work, so I put it aside for a day and when I came back to it, I noticed that poor Charlotte was kind of lost in the big picture.

That could have been interesting if the rest of the image was a part of the story, but as I mentioned earlier, I wanted a photo feel for this image, and wanted to have a blurred background. I had to put aside my feelings and do the best for the picture, so I cropped it and re-centered the subject to give her greater importance.

07 **Shadows and readable volumes:** This image represents a big step forward, maybe up to 15 more hours of work, to detail the hair, face, fabric, background and the longest part: the coat! This is almost the final image.

08

I added some soft shadows on the face, to make the volume more readable.

There was one more step left before another big decision about the composition. I thought that the coat was distracting the eye, there were too many details, to many motifs, too many things, and my eye was being led away from the face. ▶

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08 **Final touches:** So there went 10 + hours of work on the coat into the garbage.

And here came the dark gray to replace it. But I thought it was for the greater good of the image, as now it really had a better balance in all of the areas, which would benefit the viewer. And, finally, it was done.

09 **Conclusion:** As is often the case with me, I ended up with a completely different image from the one I had in my head before starting, but I think that's what makes painting so hard and fun. It's these unknown elements that turn your creation into something that you didn't think of in the first place.

A great moment of painting portraits for me is when I offer the finished image to the model who was kind enough to pose for me. So here you can see the wonderful Charlotte holding her portrait; she was happy with it and so was I.

Thank you for reading this project overview and I hope you found some useful information or tips. ●

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The Artist

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Web: www.theoprins.com
Software Used:
Adobe Photoshop

DIGITAL ART MASTER:

Sitting

by Theo Prins

Theo Prins is a master of urban sprawls. This issue, he divulges his creation process when concepting environments. Read on to discover the making of *Sitting*...

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My painting

When I sit down to work, my hand automatically starts drawing shapes of buildings and cities. It's been an enjoyable habit of mine over the years. Occasionally I view it as a comfort zone, and though that may be true, it's also true that there's always more to explore within the subject matter. I've never managed to be completely successful in portraying exactly what it was I was searching for. Until that happens, I'll probably keep trying. This piece was one of those attempts.

> **"By keeping the painting vague my mind's eye was able to see detail and color possibilities in the textures"**

Initially I was working with a fairly ordinary view of a city (**Fig.01 – 03**). After shifting through several moods, from a gray city to a green one and then back again, I arrived at **Fig.04**. In scale it's fairly similar to what we might find in our cities today; skyscrapers with normal proportions, highways and a dense urban sprawl. I liked the textures and color tones, however I was hoping to discover something more otherworldly and extreme in scale. That's when the idea for a new composition came about.

I had a sudden urge to strip apart the painting and rearrange the pieces at different angles on a new canvas (**Fig.05**). I see each step in the painting process as the potential foundation for a new idea I may not have imagined by staring at a blank canvas. Even though the result of my initial efforts didn't appeal to me, it led to a new idea and that made it worth painting.

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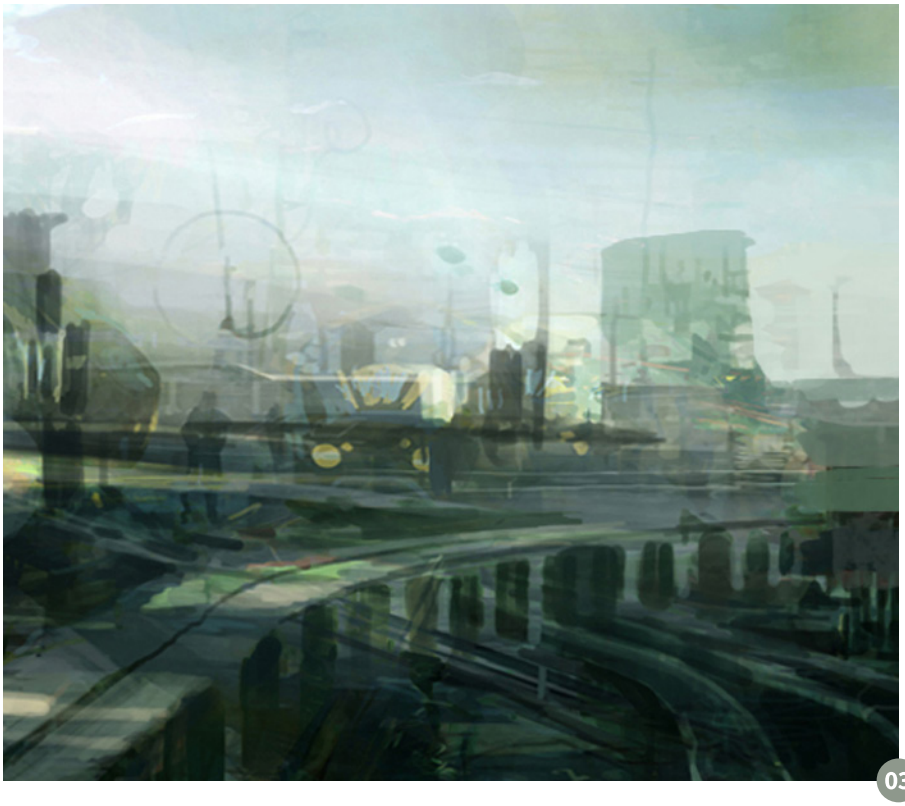
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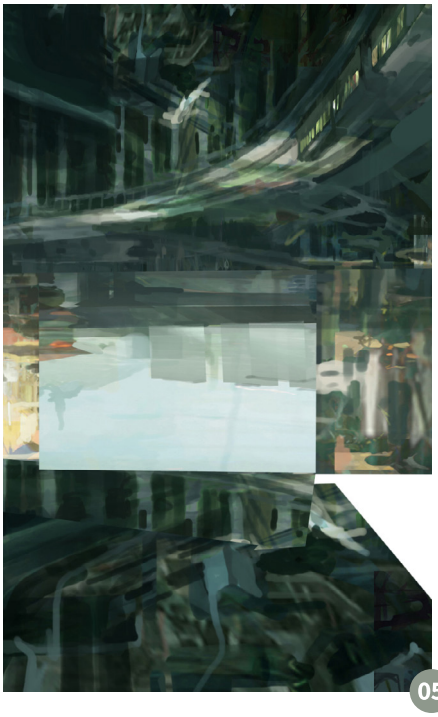
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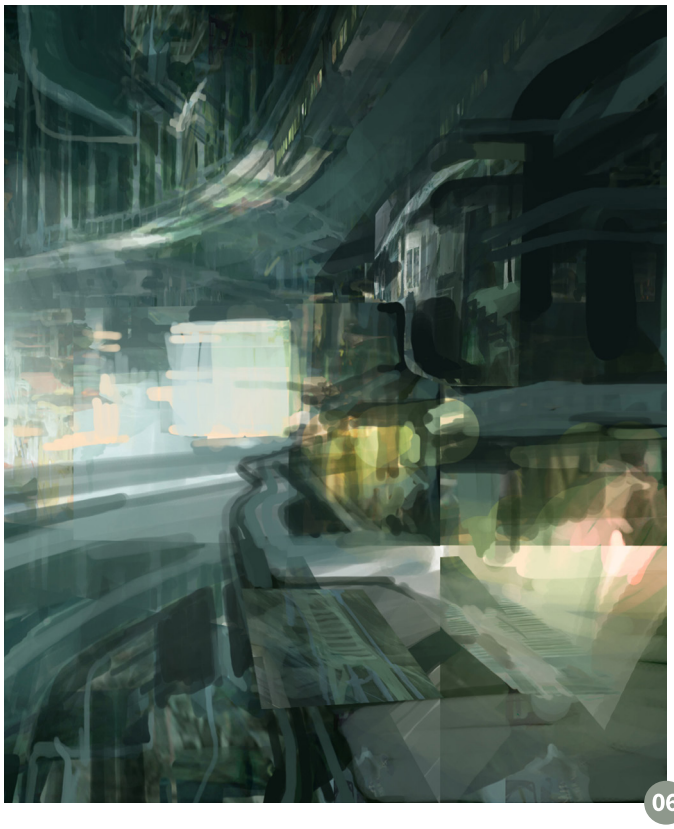

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This quick mock-up quickly became the basis for my final image. After a short while I had laid down the basic composition, placing an emphasis on the curve-like flow of the railway tracks below and the highway overpass above (**Fig.06**). By keeping the painting vague my mind's eye was able to see detail and color possibilities in the textures. I then subtly developed these discoveries into the actual painting and kept molding the shapes until solid structures began to appear (**Fig.07**).

The red temple materialized when I began to feel the need for more character and variation in the metal dwellings in the foreground, which had become quite generic. The little man sitting under the light helped create a sense of relative coziness. Perhaps the smell of freshly brewed tea is spilling out of his doorway (**Fig.08 – 09**).

At this point I had also started to become very eager to convert the painting into a stereoscopic 3D pair, which is a whole other story. As a result, I raced to the finish and prematurely detailed the image. My lights and darks became too scattered and messy, and the background became difficult to distinguish from the foreground. After indulging in my stereoscopic version I decided to return to the painting to fix all the bothersome parts. Blurring my eyes to get a sense of the whole picture made it easy to see what was wrong. Whilst painting, I also tend to glance at the navigator every few seconds. By doing this I'm aware of each brush stroke's impact on the overall image. ▶

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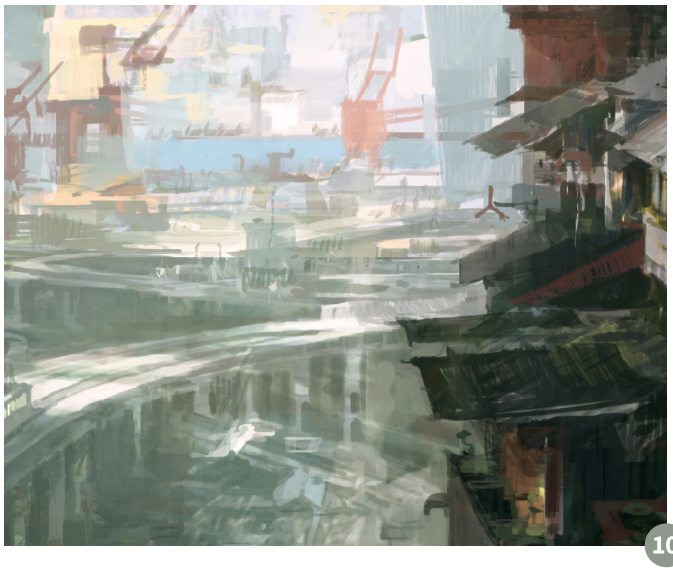

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I worked on improving the composition by removing clutter and simplifying portions into larger, more harmonious elements. For example, I changed and lightened the entire background. This gave the painting the sense of scale and atmosphere I had been looking for and also more clearly defined the buildings in the foreground (**Fig.10 – 11**). I painted the temple a more solid red, and simplified the supports of the overpass as well as the overall silhouette of the structures above it. Again, I had to like what I saw in the navigator (**Fig.12 – 14**).

The final step was to create a feeling of crispness and definition in key areas, including the main illuminated window in the center of the painting, the edges of certain objects, the buildings, and odd corners here and there. If just the right spots are detailed, it can create the illusion of definition across the rest of the image. For me, the process of finding those spots involves just letting my brush dart around the canvas, adding detail wherever I feel the impulse.

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Looking at the painting now, there are still things I'd like to change. One example is the coincidental alignment of the overpass with the large black pipes and the curved roof of the red temple.

Sometimes things like this may not grab my attention until I revisit an image several months later. There's always more that could be done, but that's it for now. ●

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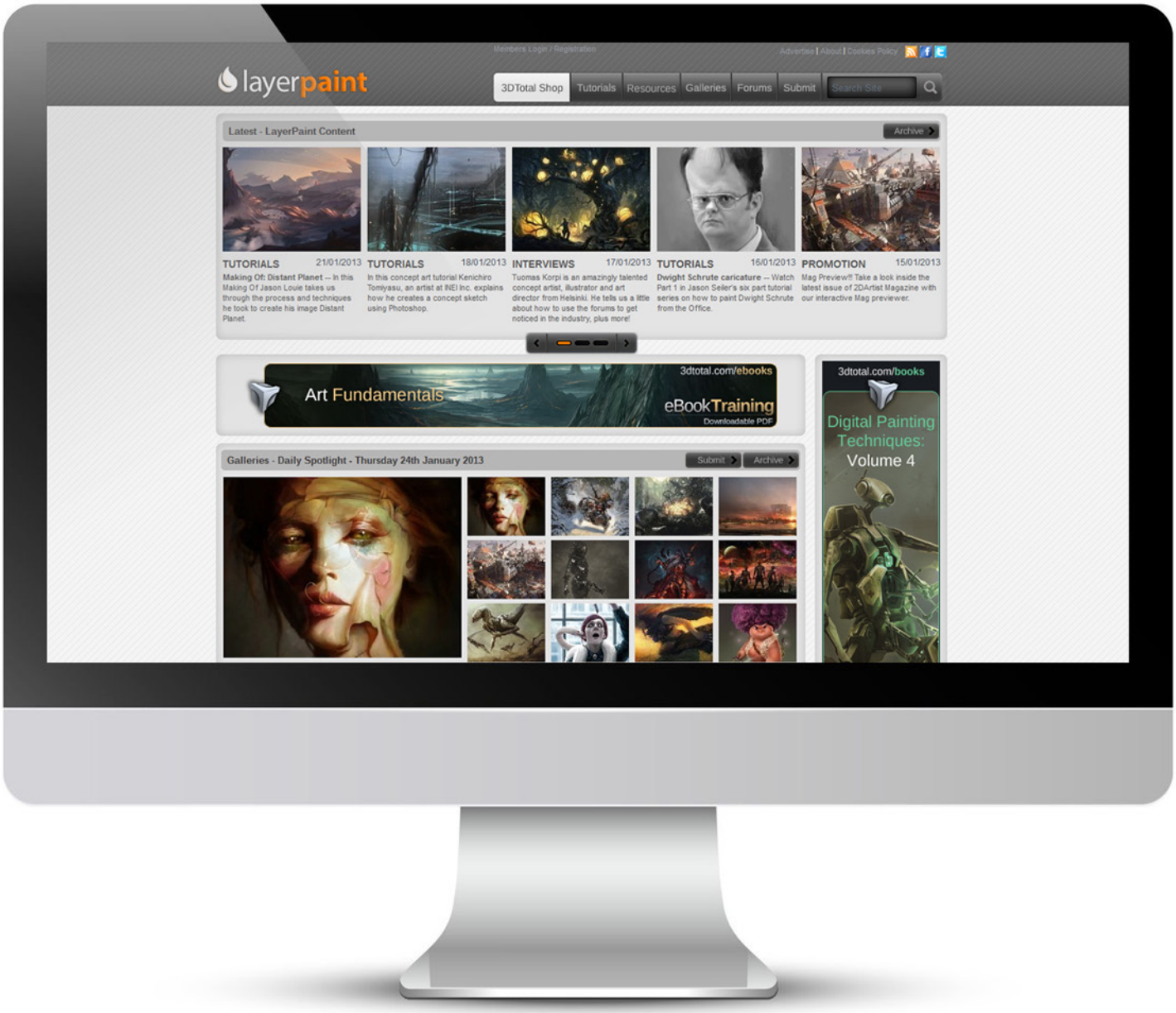

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